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TRUTH IS EVERYTHING:

A Tale for Young Persons.

BY

MRS. THOMAS GELDART,

AUTHOR OF "EMILIE THE PEACEMAKER," "DAILY THOUGHTS FOR A CHILD," "STORIES OF SCOTLAND," ETC.

"The lip of truth shall be established for ever."

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THIRD LONDON EDITION.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY.
No. 115 NASSAU STREET.
1859.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
1838968
ASTOR, LENOX AND
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W. H. Tinson, Stereotyper. Pudney & Russell, Printers.

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TRUTH IS EVERYTHING.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEED SOWN.

"COME Miss Ellen, come Miss Annie, the dew is on the grass, and what would your mamma say if she knew you were out so late? Why will you loiter so, young ladies? I tell you there are no glow-worms here, you may look till midnight. Oh dear! come on, pray; mistress is out, that is one good thing, and if you will only go to bed like good girls, I will give you some supper, and we need say nothing about it." This was the entreaty of a nurse, who, with two little girls of eight and nine years of age, was hurriedly proceeding homewards, after a walk prolonged far beyond the hour limited by all prudent mothers for evening excursions. Ellen and Annie were in no humour to hurry, however, and persisted in looking for glow-worms, and lengthening their

walk to the utmost, in spite of the real distress of their maid, who had not been with them long, and who was very anxious not to lose the confidence of her mistress thus early in her service.

Mrs. Norris was a lady of poor health, and not able to attend, as she otherwise would have thought right, to the care and education of her children. They had lately sustained a severe loss in the death of a faithful nurse, whose judicious management of the little ones had been of inestimable value to them. Her place was filled by a young woman who had received a good character of some years from her last place; and, having had but little experience in the choice of nursemaids, Mrs. Norris thought herself fortunate in supplying her great loss with so trustworthy a person as Susan Bennett. Susan was certainly an active, industrious girl, good tempered, and kind to the children; she might, indeed, have deserved the character her late mistress gave of her to Mrs. Norris, that of a most invaluable person, but—and there is a but to most characters—but for a deficiency of moral courage, which in times of temptation made her unwilling and afraid to speak the *truth*.

"Now I do say, Miss Ellen, this is very unkind of you," said poor Susan, by this time quite alarmed, "I have let you stop in the wood to oblige you, but to oblige me you won't hasten home, though you know how late it is, and how vexed your mamma would be, if she knew of your being out all in the damp."

With some trouble and persuasion the young ladies were at length diverted from their object; and, having reached home about nine o'clock, commenced a long series of requests to Susan to indulge them with supper before sending them to bed. This was a difficulty, for Mrs. Norris had old servants who would be sure to disapprove, as indeed they had already done, of the innovations of the new nurse. "But, Susan, you promised," said Annie, "you did say, if we would come home at once we should have some supper. You know you *promised* us, Susan." So poor Susan was forced to go down into the kitchen, where cook and Jane were seated at work, and was proceeding to the larder for bread and butter, when cook interposed. "Now, Susan," said she, "you ought not to indulge those children so; you know very well you ought to have been home a good

two hours back, and if you had they would not have wanted supper. Mistress does not like their eating a lot of bread and butter at bed time, and I advise you not to give it to them." Poor Susan! she had not calculated on all this trouble when she yielded to their first solicitation to extend their evening walk, and she stood with the knife and plate in her hand, quite at a loss. "But, cook, I promised them, and I don't believe they will go to bed without. It is but for once, so pray do not say anything about it, for I shall get into trouble, I see, as it is." Cook said no more, but Jane and she shook their heads as Susan went out of the kitchen with the bread and butter. They were got to bed at last, but like all over-excited, over-indulged children, they neither maintained happiness nor order, and the conclusion was a hearty fit of crying in Miss Annie, who declared that Susan twitched her in untying her frock. When they were in bed they could not, as usual, go to sleep, for they were over-heated and tired; and then Ellen said she was not quite comfortable, for she felt sure that her papa and mamma would be very sorry for what they had done that night.

"But Susan says," Annie replied, "that we must not tell papa to-morrow, and it would make mamma very unhappy when she comes home." "That is the thing," said Ellen; "now nurse used to say when we did wrong 'tell mamma,' and Susan is always saying '*don't* tell,' so I don't know what to think." Further than this their reflections did not go, for at length, thoroughly tired, they fell asleep, and did not awake till Susan stood by their bedside in the morning. Susan looked rather dull, and it was anything but a bright morning for the little girls, who were cross and discontented. Before they went down stairs Susan said, "Miss Ellen, dear, if you are wise you won't say anything to your papa about being out so late." Ellen did not speak, but Annie said, "What harm was there in it after all? I am sure I shall tell if I think of it." "Well, Miss Annie, please yourself, but all I have to say is, that you will get me into disgrace just because I was too kind to you;" and so saying Susan wiped the tears from her eyes and left the room. The effect of this conduct on the mind of each little girl was bad.

Ellen, a tender-hearted, affectionate creature,

whose little life was spent in acts of kindness and self-denial, was touched by Susan's distress. She would not have hesitated so much to tell the truth on her own account, but on Susan's, who was so kind, and on her mamma's, who would be grieved and anxious, Ellen made up her mind to say nothing about it. Annie loved Susan, too, but it was not on her account that she resolved to be silent; she had no desire to give up these lengthened walks, the nice secret suppers in bed, and the fun and the charm of sitting up late during the coming summer evenings, so Annie made up her mind not to tell. Their papa was already at breakfast, and had an open letter before him; he kissed his little girls, but looked grave and sad. "Your mamma is not better, Ellen," he said, "she will not be home as I expected; indeed, I have no doubt but that she will be absent some weeks longer. I hope you will be good girls, and do just as you know she would wish you to do were she here."

Ellen's heart was full, she blushed deeply, and even Annie looked uncomfortable. Their papa went on to say that the greatest cause of uneasiness with their mamma was the fear lest her little

children should suffer in her absence, and grow careless and naughty. Ellen blushed deeper still, and longed to tell her papa all the truth, but Susan's warnings prevented her, and thus did she set her first step on that crooked path which leads to misery and sin.

I might have illustrated the importance of adherence to the truth in childhood by a much more striking scene; but inasmuch as the case I have supposed is both natural and probable, I believe that it will gain rather than lose in weight. I have introduced Ellen and Annie to my readers in childhood, because I conceive that it is to those *early nursery* lessons that we may often trace the characteristics of riper years. The rank and noisome weeds of falsehood and deceit, which choke the lovely plants of truth and candour, are sown in the spring time of existence; or, more correctly speaking, flourish in a soil too friendly to their growth, even the human heart, which the word of God declares to be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

A short time sufficed in these young children to efface many good and precious principles, which an absent mother and a departed nurse had en-

deavoured to instil. The little girls were as orderly, and apparently as good, as ever, but a close observer might have contrasted the open, ingenuous appearance of Ellen and Annie a few weeks previously with the constrained and often uncomfortable manners which they now manifested in the presence of their father or any visitors.

The first false step is often so very slight as to be scarcely perceptible. Ellen and Annie little thought that the concealment of that evening walk from their father would have so powerful an influence on their after lives as proved to be the case.

On the mother's return, in improved health, she would have been puzzled to say in what respects her little girls were gone back. Their manners were tolerably good; their lessons, which were as usual under the superintendence of a morning governess, were progressing satisfactorily, but they were changed; the mother, with a heart alive to every fluctuation in the beloved ones, *felt* that they were changed. It was a quiet autumn afternoon when Ellen and Annie sat in the dim twilight, reading with intense interest that marvellous work "the Arabian

Nights;" they were reading so intently that when their mother's hand was placed upon each little shoulder they started as though they were hurt. "What are you reading, dears?" said the gentle voice of their mamma. Ellen blushed deeply, and Annie, the bolder of the two, said, "Oh, such a funny book, mamma, and now we are come to Aladdin and his lamp it is beautiful." Their mother smiled at Annie's eagerness. "But why, if the book is so charming, do you come and sit here alone to read it? You used to come and read to me, Ellen, before I went to Hastings: will you not do so again?"

"Oh yes, mamma," said Ellen, "but"—"But what? you thought perhaps that I might not quite approve of the 'Arabian Nights!' Is not that it?" "Yes, mamma," said Annie, "Susan borrowed it of somebody, and we saw it in her room, one day, and got her to lend it to us, but she feared you would not like it, for cook and Jane told her so, and they said it was a silly book, they knew, and full of foolish stories, and things that little children should know nothing about." "Pray, mamma," said Ellen earnestly, "do not be angry with Susan." "Oh, Annie, you should

not have told mamma that Susan lent it to us, you know we promised not." The mother was a judicious mother, and did not comment on the error of the nursemaid, but gently telling her children, as she had told them often before, that they should suspect everything as *wrong* which led them to concealment, she reminded them that the wisest way would have been to ask papa, in her absence, if they had any doubt whether they might read the "Arabian Nights." "We did, mamma," interrupted Annie, with her ingenuous face covered with blushes. "And what did he say, Annie?" "He said, mamma, that if we waited till we were older, that there were some of the 'Arabian Nights' which would not do us harm, but that he did not wish us to read them at present, and certainly not *alone*." "And so, Annie, you follow his advice by coming up to the nursery with Ellen, and reading the very book he has forbidden every day after dinner. Is that right?" Ellen and Annie were silent. "My dear children," continued their mamma, "one act of this kind may do much towards forming your characters hereafter. I do not now dwell on the nature of your secret employment. The fact of

your having deceived us is that which grieves me the most. You have appeared very anxious to retire after dinner, and I was not surprised. I cannot suppose that after my long separation from you, I am as necessary to your enjoyments as I was formerly; but I am surprised, and oh! Ellen and Annie, I am sorry that you should have deceived us thus, and have made excuses for your afternoon visits to the nursery so contrary to truth. I should be glad to believe that this is your first departure from it, but I confess I fear it is not. I am too much grieved to say more, but you know God has said 'lying lips do I hate.' You must seek for pardon from Him whose law you have broken." So saying their mother left the room; tears were in her eyes, and her distress was so great that the children were deeply affected. They sat for a few minutes in silence. The "Arabian Nights," which a little while before had appeared such a treasure, had now slipped from their hands, and lay on the floor. Their mother had not been *angry*, but she had seemed so very, very unhappy. It was now many weeks since that evening walk which had first led Ellen and Annie astray from the path of truth, but it

appeared that both children recurred to it as they sat with their eyes fixed on the fire, for when Ellen said, "Annie, do you remember our walk to Holly wood?" Annie replied, "Yes, that was what I was thinking of." "How I wish, Annie, that we had told papa then. Since then we have so often done wrong, and oh, to think how unhappy we have made poor mamma. There is Susan, too! she will be turned away, I should not wonder. Oh, dear, that mamma should have come in. Annie, don't you wish she had not?" "I am not quite sure," was the reply. "You see, Ellen, we have been naughty, and I am sure not nearly so happy as when we never wanted to hide any thing. Oh! how much I wish the old times were here, when we used to be so happy with poor old nurse. I have a great mind, Ellen, to go and tell mamma all the things we have done wrong since she left." "That is all very well, Annie, and would be right if you only were to blame, but you have no right to tell of Susan, nor"—"of you," said Annie; "well, Ellen, I won't tell this time, but mind, I won't have any more secrets with you—if they are not right secrets, I mean."

In the meantime Mrs. Norris's reflections were very sad. With high principles, and a keen sense of the beauty and importance of truth, who can wonder at her depression, or at her mournful misgivings? Her children were not truthful, they had learned to deceive. She was at a loss what to do, and it seemed to her as though a blight had fallen over her prospects, as though her cherished plants were already laid low; and instead of rejoicing over the rich fruit of her garden, she had to mourn that thorns and briers had sprung up there, and choked the seed which her loving hand had sown. Let no one say that the sorrow of the parent was needless.

Were the history of great delinquents to be traced home to the mother's knee, who can tell but that some trifling departure, such as that of Ellen and Annie, was in fact the commencement of still greater obliquity? Parents and children, for I venture to hope these pages will be read by both, as you value your happiness here, your safety hereafter, be truthful in word and in deed, be truthful in trifles. Trifles! There are no such things in education; till truth itself is a trifle, no departure from it can be called so.

CHAPTER II.

THE TEACHER'S LESSON.

YEARS had passed away. Ellen and Annie were reckoning on their return home from school for the midsummer holidays. They were still the same loving sisters as we left them, and yet not the same. In Ellen, the effects of frequent departure from truth were more serious than in her open and less tender-hearted sister. A fearful and affectionate temperament is perhaps more exposed to danger from temptation to falsehood, than the more open and impetuous nature. At fifteen, Ellen was yet more afraid to do right, than she had been at nine. She had so long cherished little habits of concealment, so long retreated from openness and candour, that she was habitually secret, even when there appeared no inducement to be so.

She would have shrunk perhaps from telling a direct falsehood, but she was constantly equivo-

cating. Her great desire for human approbation continually led her to consider this as the grand motive for action. "What will they *think?*" "what will they *say?*" was ever and anon the inward inquiry of Ellen Norris; and is it to be wondered at, that the child, who at nine years of age received her first lesson of concealment from a nurse, should at fifteen, after much practice, be an unsatisfactory, unstable, and insincere character?

The state of their mother's health had rendered it needful to place them at school soon after the *dénouement* with which the last chapter concluded. Whatever may be said of the desirableness of school education for girls, it is quite certain that the early removal of the little Norrises from the influence and sympathy of a judicious mother, was attended with consequences most unfriendly to their welfare in after life. Ellen's character, under the fostering hand which few but a watchful mother could exercise, might have become lovely. And let it not be supposed that the want of truth was yet so apparent in her, as to make her an object of suspicion and dislike to her friends. "Ellen Norris is a good obliging little creature"—was the universal tribute of her school-

fellows; "she is never angry nor ill-tempered." "A remarkably well-behaved, quiet, gentle, girl Miss Norris is," was the remark of Miss Allen, the head of the establishment of Elm Lodge, at the conclusion of a half year spent by Ellen and Annie, at this finishing school. "Very well behaved, Ma'am," was the reply of a new teacher, who, with the superior, was following the young ladies in their accustomed morning walk. A most respectable file of young ladies it was, and quite the admiration and envy of other schools in the neighbourhood; so genteel they all looked, so well fed, so happy, and so well dressed. Many mothers took counsel together, and on seeing Miss Allen's school pass for their morning walk declared that for their parts they knew of no school to which they should have greater confidence in sending their girls than to that at Elm Lodge.

"I don't think, Miss Fellowes," said Miss Allen, with a scrutinising look at the teacher, "I don't think Ellen Norris is any favourite of yours." "We ought to have no favourites you know," said Miss Fellowes, smiling. "Ah, yes, that is all very well my dear," said the good-humoured governess, "but tell me now what is it you do not like in

Ellen Norris? Tell me candidly." "Ah," replied Miss Fellowes, "now you have put it right; I deny not liking Ellen Norris, but I confess that there is something in Ellen I do not like. I do not think that she is quite an open, straightforward character." Miss Allen was for a moment excited to interest, but though a very kind schoolmistress, and the last to overlook any great error, she was no philosopher, and soon changed the subject.

"Miss Arthur is so much improved in her appearance, I am quite delighted to see how orderly and subordinate she is become. Signor Gavazzi tells me that her progress in Italian quite astonishes him."

"But Miss Fellowes, you must take pains with Mary Marshall, she is not so well behaved as I could wish, she replied in a very rude manner to her music master to-day, and in your hearing too; I am almost surprised you did not take the matter up; you really must not be too indulgent. You have not been with me long, and must remember that at school the mode of dealing with young people is necessarily different from that in private families. Be a little strict, my dear, or we cannot maintain proper order."

So spake Miss Allen, her good humoured face not indicating much disposition to rigour notwithstanding. Miss Fellowes, the new teacher, waiting for a pause began:—"I did not think Miss Marshall altogether wrong, ma'am, so that I could not correct her, especially before the other children; though I ought, perhaps, to have recommended her to be a little more polite in her way of answering her instructor. Mr. Sterne said that she played very ill, and that he did not believe she had practised, and Mary, so far as I can recollect, said, 'No Sir, that is quite true, I have not.' Was there any great harm in that, Miss Allen? it was the truth." "No, my dear, not if she said it politely, but I understand from Mr. Sterne, that when he pressed her to tell him the reason of such unusual carelessness, she said, 'Sir, I have told you the truth, I have not practised, and that is quite sufficient reason I think for my playing ill: I cannot tell you why I have not practised.' Now I think that it was extremely unladylike and wrong of Miss Marshall, and so I shall tell her; and as you appear so very fond of her, I hope you will recommend to her a line of conduct a little more gentle and becoming." Miss

Fellowes promised to speak to Mary on the subject, and the walk being ended, they returned home to dinner. After dinner was over, and the girls were permitted to spend the half hour between their meal and school duties in relaxation and amusement, Miss Fellowes joined Mary, walking in the garden, for she was evidently out of spirits, and had, unlike her custom, sought solitude. "Mary, dear," said Miss Fellowes, "I am come to ask you why you declined, and so rudely too, to tell Mr. Sterne the reason for your great carelessness to-day?" Mary coloured deeply. "Miss Fellowes, I told him the truth, and surely that is enough," said Mary. "My dear Mary," replied her teacher affectionately, drawing her hand through her arm, "I have lived in the world a few more years than you, and although none can admire truth more than I do, nor appreciate the character of the truthful more sincerely, yet there is one thing to be remembered—We must not, in our admiration of truth, forget that it is possible to disfigure as well as to adorn it: Do you understand me?" "Not exactly, Miss Fellowes. If truth is worth anything, I think it should appear at *all* times. I never care what is the con-

sequence, nor whom I offend. Speak the truth I *must;* I know I am disliked for it; the girls many of them dislike me, for I cannot pretend to admire what I do not, nor appear pleased just because I am expected to do so; why should I, Miss Fellowes?" "My dear, you have fallen into a very common error, which, if you will be calm, I will point out to you, but it is near school-time now. Walk again with me in the garden after lessons this evening, and I will tell you a story to illustrate my meaning. It is a *true* one, Mary dear, a story of my two aunts.

After school, Mary and her teacher resumed their walk in the garden, and Miss Fellowes began her story; "I have not much to tell, Mary, nothing wonderful, nothing but what is quite true. I had two aunts, both good worthy women, and each in her way useful, and desirous to do good; but the one was infinitely more successful in her efforts than the other. Both were women of high principle, both loved and admired truth as much as you can do, Mary; both were ready at all times and at any cost to *speak* the truth, they were truthful in word and in deed, and for the example, as well as precept, of my younger aunt in particular,

I feel sincere gratitude. At my father's death, which happened when I was about ten years of age, I went to reside with my grandmother and aunts, who were at that time unmarried. Aunt Jane was, from her earliest youth, what is commonly called a *plain spoken* person; she would frequently make use of the same words, or nearly so, as a little friend of mine, 'I have no notion of concealing the truth, I always speak what I think,' &c. She used often to express her wonder that the world hated truth, by which she meant, I suppose, that she was surprised people should be affronted with her plain dealings with them.

"For instance, in a morning call, when asked if she admired the pattern of a new paper which the lady of the house had perhaps chosen with especial admiration, she would reply, 'Oh dear no, I think it particularly ugly, I never admire green. There is a room at the Feathers Inn, in the next town, where we go sometimes, with a paper just like that;' and then aunt Jane would laugh and be somewhat disconcerted, that the lady should not take the joke as she did. This is a trivial example: at other times her speaking the truth so plainly was of rather more consequence.

"'Do you know anything of the Miss Walkers who are just come to live in the last house in this terrace?' inquired the clergyman, who, with his lady, was one evening taking tea at my grandmamma's. 'Oh yes,' aunt Jane replied, 'very well; they lived formerly in the same town as we did.' 'Miss Walker appears a very sensible and benevolent lady,' continued the clergyman, 'she has volunteered to superintend our new schools, Miss Fellowes, and I think she will be a suitable person, do not you?' 'No Sir,' returned aunt Jane, 'by no means; I should say she was the most unsuitable person you could have fixed on, she is so very fickle that you will find after a few weeks she will give up the whole concern; I would have nothing to do with her.' The clergyman's lady who had been walking in the garden with aunt Fanny, now came in, and going up to her husband she said, 'Miss Fanny and I have been talking about Miss Walker, my dear; I find Miss Fellowes knew her very well at Sydenham, and I have been asking her if she thinks the young lady would be suitable to take the superintendence of the schools. She talks quite encouragingly about Miss Walker, which I am very glad to hear."

"'Indeed,' said the clergyman, 'so am I, but Miss Fellowes seems to think quite the contrary. What is your opinion, Miss Fanny?' Fanny modestly repeated her opinion of Miss Walker, which was that she was an extremely energetic and useful young lady; she thought her well fitted to manage the schools, deeply interested and experienced in the education and amelioration of the poorer classes, and particularly calculated by disposition and temperament, to direct others. She then paused, as though she would rather have said no more, 'but, Sir,' she added, 'I think you might very properly give her a little advice at the outset, not to be disheartened by the first difficulty. We found at Sydenham that she was perhaps a little too much given to impetuosity at first, and depression afterwards. But I do think, Sir,' aunt Fanny earnestly continued, 'that Miss Walker is a very desirable person for our secretary and superintendent, or indeed I would not say what I have said, and I should be sorry that you should form an opinion hastily of her character from my remarks. She is so desirous of doing good, so conscientious, so amiable, and in all other respects so consistent, that one is only sorry she

has not more perseverance; but she is young, Sir, and will improve, I am sure.' Now you see, Mary, that both my aunts spoke *the truth*. Aunt Jane was quite correct in saying that Miss Walker lacked perseverance, but how different an impression was made on the clergyman's mind by the truths of the two speakers. Who shall say that the truth from Fanny's lips lost any of its beauty or purity, because charity was breathed with it; or that Aunt Jane's straightforward and unqualified reply was pleasing in his sight, who saith, 'Who art thou that judgest another?'

"It would be well if aunt Jane's truths had never given more pain, nor done more harm, than those spoken on the night of the clergyman's visit. I will give you but one other instance, and then we must return to the house, for it is growing late. We had company one evening, and amongst our visitors were two young girls, still in mourning for a brother, who, in the midst of a very gay and dissipated career, had been cut off by a rapid consumption. The time allowed him for preparation and repentance was short, nor were there, perhaps, many very satisfactory signs of a genuine change, and true sorrow for the sins of his young

life, but there were some. His career had been peculiarly sinful, but who that has lost beloved ones will not lay hold of the feeblest expression, the few half-uttered sentences of contrition on a dying bed? The sisters loved and the sisters hoped. They were young, and had been, prior to that affliction, entirely absorbed in the pursuits of fashionable life, but their brother's illness, and the conversations he had held with his pious mother on his death-bed, had deeply affected them, and they had learned the folly of putting off religion to a dying day. The conversation of some of the visitors turned on the subject of the repentance of very wicked persons on their death-beds. My aunt Jane, who was always dogmatical in the truths she laid down, begged leave to differ from a lady who was expressing a hope that a poor girl whom she had just visited, (a notoriously bad character) was prepared for the awful change that awaited her. 'I think nothing,' said aunt, 'of death-bed repentance. Tell me not, as old John Newton used to say, how a man *died*, but how he *lived*.' The sisters listened with beating hearts, for they had always held aunt Jane in great reverence, and thought her so very good,

that the opinion she held had great weight. Aunt Jane continued, and as she spoke aunt Fanny watched the countenances of the young ladies with an expression of earnest sympathy, which, had they been in a condition to observe, might almost have healed the wound the stern truth from her sister's lips was inflicting on the broken spirits of the bereaved girls.—At length the elder arose, and with irrepressible emotion hastened from the room, and when aunt Fanny followed her, she found that she had thrown herself on a couch in an adjoining apartment, and was weeping such bitter tears, as may no truth from your lips, dear Mary, ever cause to flow. It was in vain that Fanny, with all the truthfulness and tenderness of her nature combined, assured the weeping girl that her sister was incapable of intentionally wounding any one; that whilst in feeling strongly on a subject, she was apt to speak with severity, her heart was kind and her intentions good. Her voice of gentle sympathy was long ere it could soothe the violence of the young girl's grief, and it was with touching agony that she lifted up her tearful and flushed face to Fanny, who was bending over her, as she said,

'Oh, Miss Fellowes, if death-bed repentance is in vain, how can we bear to think of our brother again?'

"But we must now return to the house, my dear, only tell me first, why you refused to answer Mr. Sterne's question to-day. Had you any reason for doing so? Had any of your school-fellows prevented your practising, by an unfair use of the piano?" Mary was silent, and Miss Fellowes continued: "Well, my dear, I will not press the question, but remember my story, and in future try to speak the truth politely and respectfully."

The fact was that Ellen Norris had been very much behind-hand in her preparation for the music lesson. She had risen earlier than usual to practise, and when it was time to vacate the seat at the piano for Mary, she was so earnest in her entreaties to remain, that Mary consented, and had thus incurred blame which properly did not belong to her.

Mary had quite relied on Ellen's explaining the cause of her backwardness to Mr. Sterne, and on seeing her blush, and appear agitated at the time the question was asked, resolved to be silent on

the subject; and somewhat irritated with Ellen, gave the reply which was properly reproved as ungracious and unpolite. It was Ellen Norris that suffered most keenly, however, and if those very timid people, who fear to tell the truth, could for once change places with the more courageous and candid, they would be rather astonished to see how small a proportion the worst sufferings of the truth-teller bear to the fearful vacillation, the nervous and causeless terrors to which their own hearts are a prey. There is nothing to be feared from *truth*. It is the true charm, and those who wear it are safer than they who bear the armour which subtlety and expediency would frame. "Speak the truth in love," then, dear readers, and never fear that it shall prevail against every obstacle which appears now so formidable.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET.

IT may seem as though we had kept Annie Norris rather too much in the background, a situation by no means according to her taste, nor to her habits. Where Annie Norris was there was sure to be abundance of merriment and life. She was not to be sure quite so orderly and lady-like as Miss Allen thought becoming, but she was a merry, light-hearted girl, and unlike Ellen did not labour to conceal her delinquencies, or if she did, the attempt was usually unsuccessful. She was one of those thoughtless rattling young ladies, whose tongues are continually leading them into all sorts of disasters. She was careless of truth as she was careless of everything; that is to say, she would take no particular pains to represent a thing literally. Her love of talking was such, that she found it impossible to resist the temptation of adorning

her stories with those little embellishments which a strict lover of truth could not fail to condemn. She seldom was to be depended upon for a narration. She always saw more than others; her hearing, to judge by her relation of incidents, was invariably more acute than that of her companions. Her deficient view of truth shewed itself, in short, in a habit of exaggeration. It would be her custom to make use of the most extravagant expressions to convey her meaning. Her headaches were always dreadful and excruciating; her admiration ecstatic; her adventures marvellous, a love of which, by the way, not unfrequently leads young persons to exaggerate.

The young ladies were very desirous of presenting Miss Allen with an affectionate acknowledgment of her kindness to them during the past half year, when most of them had been more or less indisposed, and some very seriously, with a prevailing epidemic. The elder girls were in confidential conversation on the subject one Saturday afternoon, about a fortnight before the holidays. By some means, Annie had gained admittance to the secret conclave, for her schoolfellows, not very confident in her discretion, very

often excluded her from their conferences when secrecy was an object.

"Now, Annie, be sure you don't tell," said one of the young ladies. "We want to keep it a secret from every one except Miss Fellowes. We must tell her, because she must go out with us to get the things, but it would be such a pity for Miss Allen to know. We want to surprise her by putting down the new carpet in her little sitting room, and having the new chair all in order by the time she comes back from her brother's. She is going there for two days, on the 20th; and oh, it will be so charming to surprise her." "Of *course* I shan't tell," said Annie, vehemently. "You are so suspicious of me. I should not think of doing such a thing, and I think if I am expected to subscribe, it is but fair I should have my taste in the matter consulted." To this there was no answer, and Miss Fellowes coming into the school-room, the girls eagerly rushed to ask her advice in this important matter.

The young ladies had made a noble collection among themselves and their friends. Mothers, grateful for the kindness of the governess, had

gladly subscribed, and the amount was quite sufficient for a carpeting to Miss Allen's private sitting room, and an easy chair which she had been heard to admire by one of the pupils. The teacher and two or three of the elder girls, amongst whom were Ellen and Annie Norris, went to choose the carpet, &c., one day when the school shopping was done; and Annie had resisted several temptations to talk about it before the younger children, or in the presence of a very loquacious servant maid, who would gladly have retailed it to Miss Allen.

There was an inquisitive young lady in Miss Allen's school, (a day boarder), to whom it was a source of excessive mortification that she was not consulted in the many plans and schemes, and little mysteries in which school girls delight. She was particularly anxious at this time to know what was the cause of the frequent consultations in the play room, from which she was invariably excluded; what could be the reason of the sudden hush whenever she entered the circle. In short, she now determined at all hazards to discover the secret; and for this purpose she attacked Annie Norris one day, when she was walking in the

garden, with the question—"What is it that you elder girls are planning together, Annie?" Annie replied, "Oh, I must not tell you; you will know in time. It is to be kept quite a secret from Miss Allen." "A secret is it," said Miss Barbara White, "then I expect it is something you are ashamed of." "No, indeed," said Annie, "nothing of the sort; but I must not tell *you*, for the girls all say that you are such a mischief maker it would not be safe to trust you." This speech so excessively annoyed Barbara, that she instantly retaliated by saying that for her part she had heard much the same thing said of Miss Annie, and that she should be sorry if she had no more power of keeping a secret than Annie had. In fact, high words were beginning to arise between the young ladies; in a short time a positive quarrel would have ensued, but for the sound of the dinner bell, which, for the present, put a stop to the dispute.

After dinner, Barbara sought out Annie, and renewed the subject in a more conciliatory manner than before. By degrees, the inquisitive and unprincipled girl induced her thoughtless companion to betray the entire confidence of her

schoolfellows; and that which had been a secret so carefully cherished, was now one no longer.

Barbara, piqued at the want of confidence her schoolfellows had in her, as well as from her real love of talking, spoke of the intended purchase in such a manner as to give an appearance of meanness on Miss Allen's part, in thus tacitly allowing so large a collection to be made amongst the young ladies' friends in order to gratify her desire for articles of luxury and personal comfort. Many of the parents listened to the report gravely, whilst others gave little heed to it. Barbara's mother being of the former class, and somewhat given to gossiping like her daughter, spoke of it at an evening party to her friends, in such terms as to leave a most unfavourable impression on the minds of her hearers.

It was observed by the young ladies that Miss Allen's countenance wore an unusual expression of reserve and gloom, when, as they were rising from table on the last Saturday afternoon in the half year, she gravely requested them to remain a few minutes, whilst she mentioned a subject to them which had caused her great uneasiness. She then proceeded to say, that having heard

that morning, during a call, that the young ladies had made, or were about to make, a subscription to present her with some acknowledgment of her care and nursing during their past illness, she had to request, as a personal favour, that they would abandon their intention, as it would be painful to her to refuse, but impossible to accept any such needless gift; and with these words Miss Allen withdrew, leaving the young ladies in a state of perturbation and disappointment not easy to conceive.

Annie's situation was anything but enviable. All eyes were directed to her, and she felt as though she were the object of universal suspicion. But for the presence of Miss Fellowes, the young ladies would have attacked her with some severity. As it was, they contented themselves with whispers and signs, indicative of their indignation. Miss Fellowes, who was ignorant of the cause of these signs, took no notice of them, further than to express her sympathy with the disappointed children, and regret that their pleasant plan was thus frustrated.

When they were left to themselves, however, Miss Marshall, in no very measured terms, began

to reproach Annie for her tattling. "It must have been *you*, that told," said Mary, indignantly. "Why *must* it be me!" said Annie, "I declare positively, I never told Miss Allen anything about it. I never mentioned the subject to Miss Allen, nor—nor to any one. It is very hard that I am to be taxed with it, very hard indeed." Poor Annie! Hard as it was she was obliged to bear it, no one believed her; and when Miss Fellowes asked an interview with her alone, she felt as if her cup of mortification were full indeed. "Annie, dear," said Mrs. Fellowes, "is it true that you have been guilty of this breach of confidence? Is it possible that you have told that which your schoolfellows were so anxious to keep secret?" Annie, with many blushes, repeated her assurances, but there was something in Miss Fellowes' mild and steady glance, beneath which she quailed, and her tone was less positive than at first. "I never told Miss Allen, madam, I assure you," said Annie. As Miss Fellowes silently listened to her speech, "I never told any one," she would have said, but there was still something in Miss Fellowes' eye which prevented her. "My dear girl," said her teacher solemnly,

"I have not called you to me in order to tempt you to perseverance in falsehood and deception. Forget that I am here, think that One is present, who says in his word, 'Lying lips are an abomination unto me.' Could you, if He were to ask the question, answer Him thus, my dear?" Annie was silent, and Miss Fellowes continued.

"I do not want you to confess to me. I only wish to know the fact, that if you are innocent I may disabuse the minds of your companions—may I do so?" Annie was still silent. "Of what are you afraid, Annie? Can the worst things your schoolfellows may say of you be comparable with your present misery, if, as I fear, you are guilty? It is a strange thing that you should dread the opinion of a few young girls, when you are not afraid of the judgment of your God. If you have not told Miss Allen, say, who did you tell?" Annie at length related the conversation with Barbara, and her mind being somewhat relieved by the confession, she asked Miss Fellowes to advise her how she might repair the error she had committed. "That," said Miss Fellowes, "is I fear impossible. Miss Allen has evidently heard too much to reconcile her to the idea of

accepting the present. She has been told also, that your papa was heard to remark that he could not admire the taste or feelings of a governess who could permit her pupils to tax their parents for presents of this sort." "Oh! Miss Fellowes," interrupted Annie, "Papa never —I will tell you now how that came about. Miss Barbara was saying that she wondered if all the girls' parents contributed willingly. I said, papa told me when I asked him for the money, that he did not at all like the plan of making presents at the end of the half year, amongst girls who did not care for one another, and he hoped that this would not be the custom at our school; though he could not, he said, grudge the money in this instance to our governess, whose kindness merited an acknowledgment. This is what he said, Miss Fellowes; oh, how wicked of Barbara to repeat what I told her in confidence, and to exaggerate too!" "Hush, Annie," said her teacher, "be merciful to Barbara, *you* at least must not be severe. Is it not possible that you may have made some addition to your papa's speech in relating it to Barbara." Annie confessed her fear that this might be the case, and

with a full and humbled heart retired to her room, having received a severe lesson on the importance of watchfulness over the tongue, that unruly member which had thus betrayed her into more than one falsehood, and caused her such deep pain and humiliation.

Here be it remarked, that a *single* falsehood is very rare; there is almost invariably a necessity to ply up one lie with a second. The path of truth is safe, straight and easy; that of deceit has so many windings and turnings, that one deviation from uprightness may lead to a thousand intricacies which we little anticipated at the outset. Thus did poor Annie find that the way of transgressors was hard. It need scarcely be said that the cool and restrained manners of her companions, their suspicious and altered demeanour, and the obvious sense of injury that they manifested to the poor girl, were distressing aggravations of her grief. "For such a little thing, for such a trifle, to be so treated," said both Ellen and Annie. Alas! they forgot, or they were blinded to the fact, that truth is respected and admired, even by those who value it not for its own sake; that a false and deceitful person rarely owns a friend.

and that the old truism is a wiser one than many, which declares, "Honesty is the best policy."

The parting advice of Miss Fellowes to the two girls as they walked round the garden with her on the evening before their departure for home, may give some useful hints to those who do not set a watch over their lips, and are too apt to think that a lie, the intention of which is not criminal, cannot be so very heinous as some people imagine.

"You are both of you," Miss Fellowes remarked, "careless of truth, and although in a different manner, each of your characters is affected by it. You, Ellen, are afraid of the truth; it is that fear which makes you heedless of the disgrace or discomfort of a schoolfellow; as for instance, in the case when Miss Marshall incurred blame from her music master, owing to your want of common honesty and justice. Only one amongst many proofs, dear Ellen, I regret to say, that although you have the fear of man before your eyes, which bringeth a snare, you have but little of the fear of that God who desireth truth in the inward parts."

"You, Annie, are constantly led into departures from truth from another cause. You are not so timid as Ellen. In relating an event, or answer-

ing the commonest question, you are rash and inconsiderate, but, as the past occurrence has proved, your indifference to truth is scarcely less mischievous than your sister's. I cannot tell you how anxious I am on your account, particularly as it appears you are not likely to return to school, in consequence of the increased illness of your mother. My dear girls, be afraid of nothing but of sin. There cannot be, for a young girl, a more deadly enemy with which to enter life, than that of a false tongue. Fear that above all. It will cloud all that is bright and lovely, and magnify all that is defective in your conduct. If you notice the characters of your schoolfellows, you will see that those who are the most beloved, and certainly the most respected amongst them, are characterised by a love of truth, a single heartedness and straightforwardness which adorns their every word and act. If they do wrong there is an ingenuousness in their acknowledgments, which often takes off the edge of the sharpest reproofs. There is no one who does not feel that Mary Marshall, notwithstanding her thoughtless and impetuous temper, is worthy the respect and affection of both her teacher and companions,

from her unblemished candour and uprightness. But after all, human approbation is a very poor and deficient motive for action; that alone can never make a person truthful, and you must be deeply convinced of the sin of falsehood in the sight of God, or you will never be true in word and action. I cannot give you this sense, but I trust that you will not forget the last lesson I may ever have it in my power to give you."

The reflections of Ellen and Annie on their pillow that night, were sorrowful; the elder sister, with her characteristic sensitiveness to reproof and censure, lay long pondering Miss Fellowes' words, and recalled, though indistinctly, and with mournful regret, the days of early childhood, when the first lesson of concealment had been taught. As she wept, some feeble aspirations arose, some languid resolutions were formed, but she had no conception of the danger and sinfulness of her besetting sin. No wonder, then, that the sun which awoke her and her light-hearted sister on the morning of their return home, should have dissipated those half formed resolves, even as the morning cloud and the early dew.

CHAPTER IV.

TRIAL OF PRINCIPLE.

THE return home and the vacation over, Miss Allen's pupils reassembled, with some additions to their number, for the school was, and deservedly so, in high estimation. It was not Miss Allen's fault that she was not omniscient, nor able to foresee and prevent the little troubles and feuds into which the community within her walls at times fell. Mary Marshall, whose education (to use a common expression) was not yet finished, returned for another half year, and it was well for her that she did so. Miss Fellowes, whose interest in her pupils did not wax cold, was still her faithful friend, and her counsel and example did much to improve her character. Mary had a sensible and judicious mother, but she was the eldest girl in a large family of sons, and had few female acquaintances at home; this gave a sort of *brusquerie* to her manners by no way winning.

An event, which took place at the commencement of the half year, caused a great sensation amongst the young ladies of Miss Allen's establishment, and as Mary Marshall was a principal actor in the scene, we will relate it, illustrating as it does the importance of strict adherence to truth in the smaller as well as the greater affairs of life.

The supper bell had rung, and the girls, with one exception, were collected round the table. Miss Fellowes, who was presiding at the time, missed the eldest girl in the school, and immediately inquired of the young lady next in age, if she knew anything of the cause of her companion's absence; she replied in the negative, and receiving no answer, Miss Fellowes inquired generally if any one knew where Miss Haynes was. Mary Marshall immediately replied, "yes ma'am, I do." "Will you go and call her then, my dear? she could not have heard the bell." Mary hesitated. "Where is Miss Haynes, Mary?" "She is in the garden, ma'am." "In the garden! after dark, Mary? there is something wrong I am sure: but I do not wish you to speak to your schoolfellow's disadvantage, so go and call her, and I will hear an account from her own lips: go, my dear."

Still Mary did not move, and her look at Miss Fellowes was so entreating, that she almost regretted having given the command, but having done so, she seriously repeated it, and Mary was at length compelled to rise from her seat.

The two girls were friends, not so much from similarity as from circumstances. They had entered the school at the same time, their progress and taste in study was equal, but their dispositions differed widely. Emma Haynes was by no means an insincere character. Had she been so, she would have found no favour in Mary's eyes, but her ideas of sincerity differed a little from those of her friend.

She was content in times of difficulty to be silent if possible. Even the truth, she would say, is not to be spoken at all times, and on this principle she accordingly acted. To do Emma justice, to be loved was, with her, much more essential to her happiness than to be admired. She was extremely strong in her affections, and to bring any friend of hers into disgrace, would have been a grief which she could not bear. Let no young lady expect a very romantic adventure, though it certainly took place under a tree in Miss Allen's

garden. Emma Haynes was not a romantic girl, she was, moreover, very plain in her person, and being the eldest of several children, and the daughter of a notable, sensible mother, had had but little time to cultivate her imagination or to get up attachments and engagements at sixteen.

The meeting under the tree had, however, taken place for three nights, and Mary was very uneasy about it. She knew it had "the appearance of evil," and if, as Emma assured her, there was no harm in what she did, why thus make an innocent thing into a guilty one?

She had spoken to this effect to Emma on the very night in question, when at the sound of the supper bell Emma entreated Mary to leave her, and to be silent about her absence. "But, Emma, dear, if I am *asked?*" said Mary. "Well, say I wish for no supper; that is true." "Yes, if I am asked whether you wish for supper, I will say so, but I shall not give that answer if I am asked where you are." "Oh, dear, Mary, you are so over scrupulous: well I would say anything for you, dear." "And I would say anything for you, Emma, but a *lie*, and that I would not say for myself." So saying she joined her companions,

and the conversation then ensued which has already been recorded.

Mary soon returned with Emma. Miss Fellowes took no notice of her, but allowed her to take her seat in silence. There were several very angry glances sent across the table to Mary Marshall, however, which she well understood. There was not a girl in the school who did not respect Mary, but there were a few who feared her uncompromising fidelity, and it required some patience, and some degree of equanimity, to finish her supper under the ordeal of glances and signs to which she was subjected.

Let no one think lightly of the beauty and value of that principle, which enables a single heart to stand without wavering, against the disapproval expressed or implied of a girl's school. Mary had nothing to fear, however, for she had nothing to hide, and after a few moments the indignation she had felt subsided. She ate her bread and butter in peace with her schoolfellows and with herself. Emma Haynes was a universal favourite, her kindness and suavity of manners rendered her a far more popular girl than Mary. If a little one were in trouble, Emma was the kind and

sympathizing friend. If any assistance were needed in lessons or in work, Emma was always at hand; and it was thought almost treasonable to speak ill of Emma, or to suppose that she could do wrong. However, she was not infallible, and after the evening prayers were over, Miss Fellowes gently detained Mary and Emma in order to ask for an explanation.

Emma was silent and Mary also. "Do you then refuse to explain yourself, Emma?" said Miss Fellowes. Emma did not reply, and Miss Fellowes not wishing to incur the responsibility of judging in Miss Allen's absence, dismissed them for the night, but with a constraint in her manner especially felt by Mary. The silence enjoined in the bed chamber did not permit of the young ladies' comments, but it was a hard task for Mary to meet the averted looks, and to hear the scornful whispers of her companions the next day. From the high favour in which Emma was held, there was not a girl who did not feel that Mary had acted a treacherous and unfriendly part, while Mary was not without her doubts whether silence would not have been warrantable in this instance. The two young ladies were summoned to Miss

Allen's sitting room immediately after breakfast. She questioned Emma first. For a long time it seemed as though she intended to persevere in silence; at length, however, she confessed that her reasons for remaining out of an evening were as follows:

An old servant of her father's, who had been dismissed, owing to some suspicions which had rested on his character, unjustly as Emma believed, had accidentally seen her at the corner of the garden next the high road, and had besought her intercession with her father to procure him a situation. He was, he said, in deep distress. He was a father of several children, and had hitherto borne a good character. The cause of his dismissal was a suspected connivance at some dishonest practices of his fellow-servants. He was now in poverty, and his only petition was for a character which would enable him to obtain an honest livelihood in service. This character Mr. Haynes would not give, and to Miss Emma, the unfailing friend of distress, John Ellis had accordingly betaken himself. He had been at work assisting a gardener for the last few days, in mending the fences of a neighbour's garden, and his first

meeting with Emma was accidental. Emma told her tale simply, and it did not fail to interest both Miss Allen and Miss Fellowes. "But why," they naturally remarked, "why keep it a secret? It was not wrong to speak to the man in the first instance, but it *was* wrong to continue a clandestine communication with him, and implies a sense of guilt which it still remains for you to explain."

Anxiously did her hearers wait for a reply. Emma hesitated, but Mary, her better genius, pressing her arm, earnestly said, "Oh, dear Emma, say all the truth, do not leave any doubt, we feel so relieved now, do not disappoint us." Still Emma did not speak, and Miss Allen and Miss Fellowes looked so serious, that Mary's earnestness increased. "Pray tell us, Emma, was it that you feared your papa would be angry with you if he knew of your interview with the man? Perhaps I ought not," said Mary, blushing at her own eagerness, "to suggest such a thing, but I so often tell Miss Fellowes the wrong and foolish things I do, that I cannot conceive why you should hide anything from such a friend. Oh, dear Emma, do tell all the truth; was it not so?" Emma confessed that it was the case, that

this was truly the reason for her desiring to keep her meeting with John secret. "How then," said Miss Fellowes, "do you hope to serve him?" "I don't know," Emma replied, "I have given him relief from my own purse, and will do so as long as possible, but I feel I dare not speak to papa about John. He was so very angry with him that I feel sure it would be useless." "It seems to me," said Miss Fellowes, "scarcely probable that a man of your father's experience is mistaken in his estimate of an old servant's character. It is not rather presumptuous, Emma, in a young girl like you to form a judgment and act upon it thus in direct opposition to his known wishes? Do you know of any circumstances to extenuate John's guilt? for surely you ought to have done so before encouraging his visits." "Papa never thought, Miss Fellowes, that John was guilty of dishonest acts, but he said he dismissed him because he knew of the dishonesty of others, and was silent; John says that if it were to do again he could not act otherwise. He felt it would have been wrong in him to take away his fellow-servants' character; and oh, Miss Fellowes, it does seem hard to me, that John, who

has been a faithful servant to us so many years, should suffer because others were dishonest."

"Well," said Miss Allen, who, relieved from the principal cause of anxiety about her pupil, was scarcely equal to the effort of descending into further particulars of the man-servant's history, "You have done wrong, Miss Haynes, and acted very indiscreetly, I consider. How extremely unladylike and improper an appearance it must have presented to passers-by, to see one of my young ladies talking over a hedge to a man in a fustian jacket, after dusk, too. I certainly cannot overlook it; you must retire to rest every night, for the next week, immediately after lessons are over, and I trust I shall have no cause to repent of so very lenient a sentence on you;" so saying Miss Allen dismissed the girls.

But their faithful teacher, feeling how slight was the reference that had been made to the real point of blame in Emma's character, followed the weeping girl into her bed-room, where Mary was trying to console her, and affectionately pointed out to her how correct, although apparently severe, was her father's conduct to the man, and how deficient were her own views of the subject.

"Well," said Emma, drying her tears, (for she felt some indignation, if the truth must be told, against Mary, as the first cause of her disgrace,) "I should have done just the same as John, right or wrong; I could not have told of another. I could have confessed my own faults, but as to interfering with other people's, my conscience would have been quite easy."

"I am aware," replied Miss Fellowes, "that your feeling is a very common one, but there is much mistake and extreme injustice in it. If you carry out that principle to its fullest extent, you would yourself see a servant injure his master without speaking to him on the subject."

"I don't see that, Miss Fellowes; I am speaking now of the conduct of fellow-servants, and to be the means of injuring each other's character, I think, as John thinks, is a kind of dishonesty in itself. We have no right to take away a person's character, his very bread." "Fellow-servants are fellow-creatures, Emma; and I believe there is but one rule which should guide us in our conduct to them or to each other. The bible teaches us that there are duties of servants to masters as well as of servants to each other.

If a servant would not see oppression and unkindness from a master or mistress to a fellow-servant in silence, neither do I think he should witness injustice or dishonesty from a servant to a master, without in the first place warning the offender, and in the second divulging all his knowledge of the affair. It is very common to hear persons speak of the injustice of taking away a servant's character, but remember a servant must maintain a character. On any frivolous or trifling pretext, any pique on the part of the employer, to refuse to give a just testimony to a servant, is without doubt improper, and as you say *dishonest;* but where a servant is convicted of any violation of the laws of honesty, steadiness, or sobriety, I believe a master is bound to be explicit in his replies to every question relative to that servant's conduct. Although John has not robbed your father, he had, according to your own statements, allowed others to do so, and has therefore forfeited all right to the character of a *faithful* servant. However, Emma, my dear, there is some one else in fault besides John. There is no circumstance in life which can excuse a lie: few I believe which can warrant concealment. Concealment is

the child of transgression. It was not the voice of a kind and gracious God which drove Adam and Eve amongst the trees of the garden; it was a sense of sin, and, dear Emma, you would find it difficult to convince me, and what is of more consequence, your own conscience, that you are satisfied with your conduct last evening. Suppose after the first meeting with John, which appears to have been accidental, you had acted thus, had told him that under the restrictions and rules of school you could not see him there again, nor could you act in opposition to your father's judgment and wishes. You might have promised to represent the case to him, to intercede for him as far as possible; and having done this, you would have had no difficulty in stating the circumstance to Miss Allen, or myself, and seeking our advice on the subject. I want you to see, Emma, that your fault has been *concealment*, and that you have made an indiscretion into a positive sin by thus acting. Let this be a lesson to you, and so far from feeling aggrieved with Mary because she feared to offend God rather than you, be grateful for such a friend. Be reconciled to her, Emma, will you not?" Emma's hand was offered, but

her heart held back, and it was but half a reconciliation as Mary felt. But she was cheered by the knowledge that there was no just cause for Emma's coldness, and entered the school-room cheerful and happy.

It was not easy to remain there cheerful and happy, however, for the young ladies now freely discussed the matter. "We shall be quite afraid of you," said a certain Miss Worth; "you are as great a tattler as Annie Norris was." "Yes, and you were hard enough on her," said another voice, "for telling of Miss Allen's present. I really think it is sufficient to speak the truth for oneself, Miss Marshall." Mary's spirit rose, but, acting under the control of principle, and remembering Miss Fellowes' words, that it is possible to disfigure as well as to adorn truth, she quietly said—"What *should* I have answered? I left Emma in the garden; she had told me that she could not come in, and asked me to say she wished for no supper, and I had answered her. I told her I could not, and would not, tell a story to please her. Now what should I have said in answer to Miss Fellowes? What would you have said? for it is easy to blame me, but what answer would

have been the right one if mine were not?" "Miss Fellowes asked where Emma was, and you might, without telling a story, have made twenty excuses; for your bosom friend too! 'Oh, save me from my friends' is no idle motto, I see." "Well, but," said Mary, who, in spite of this bitter speech, kept her temper, "tell me one of the twenty excuses I might have made: come, now, I am as sorry as you are for Emma, more sorry I believe than a great many of you. I love Emma dearly, and she knows that, but I love something else better." "Oh," said Miss Worth, "you could have given her own reply, that she did not wish for supper." "Miss Fellowes did not ask anything about supper, so far as I can recollect," replied the immovable Mary. "Oh, nonsense!" said Miss Worth, "you make yourself quite ridiculous. I tell you that there would have been no falsehood in that. Other people love truth as well as the immaculate Miss Marshall. I would not tell a lie for the world, but as to getting a school-fellow and a friend into trouble by obstinately sticking for the truth as you do, I don't believe there's a girl in the school but despises you for it." "Well," said Mary,

"then I must be content to be despised. I believe that I should have done wrong had I kept back the truth last night, and I had rather you should despise me than despise myself, or than that God should be angry with me, as he would have been had I prevaricated. I think prevarication is a mean, cowardly sort of lying, which I would not practise if it were to save me from the *stake*," said Mary warmly. And she said the truth; there was a martyr's heart beating in that youthful bosom, a heart which, though it could love tenderly, nay passionately, could not for any earthly object of affection sin against a God of truth. Still it needed a trust in God, and great courage in the poor child, and she had to remember, ere she could still the tempest of her heart, that he whose example she desired to follow was despised and rejected of men because "he told them the *truth*."

Think not lightly of Mary's conflict, nor of Mary's victory, unless you yourselves have waged such a warfare. An hour will come when the greatest conqueror shall feel that his courage was pusillanimity indeed compared with hers that day.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOTHER'S DEATH—THE SERVANT'S STORY.

THE sisters were at home once more; their school days were over: the path of life with all its joys and sorrows lay before them, and little were these young pilgrims prepared for the conflicts of the way. Six months had passed since the evening conversation recorded in a previous chapter; and six months had wrought a change in the fortune of Ellen and Annie Norris. Summer was over, and it seemed too as though a cloud rested on the summer sky of their existence. Their mother was dead. Who that has been bereaved but can recall the struggle of the heart in returning to the daily paths which have been forsaken for the last sad duty of affection, that of accompanying some beloved one to the borders of the dark valley of the Shadow of Death. Where the illness has been long, and where the common occupations of the attendant on the sick couch

have been for some time laid aside, there is not a more weary task than to resume the unfinished needlework, to re-open the long closed book, where the leaf is turned down at some page, perhaps, by the departed.—To go about the house as in a dream, and ever and anon to wake almost with a start, and to feel the words, "Where is our beloved?" die upon the lips, and the consciousness that he shall return no more, chill the heart as the breath of night, or as the blast of winter. Listless and despondent, Ellen and Annie sat in the quiet parlor of their father's house one winter's afternoon, a few days only having elapsed since the remains of their beloved mother were laid in the grave. They tried to resume their usual employments, but the eye of each motherless girl instinctively wandered to the vacant place, and the heart was filled every moment with the flood of grief, whilst recollections poured in at every passage.

They did not weep, it scarcely seemed the time for that; there was almost a sense of the mother's presence, which stilled any tumultuous outbreak of sorrow. At last the elder sister opened the piano. "My mother's song!" said she; "I have never heard that since she sang it;" then gently,

and with a plaintive voice, Ellen sang the words which their mother had written on the occasion of her own bereavement, and which they had often heard from her lips when infants at her knee.

"Come, oh our mother, come!
Dark is the cloud that resteth on our hearth,
Dim are the joys of this our childhood's home,
Sad is each household path.

"We wait at even-tide
For thy soft blessing breathed in slumbering ear:
We see thee in our dreams at each bed-side,
Thy loving voice we hear.

"We waken with a start;
The vision melteth in morn's beams away;
Grief comes as surely to the striken heart
As light cometh with day.

"Sadly thy flowers bloom,
Opening their glories to thy sealed eyes;
The spring birds warble o'er thy closed tomb
Their softest melodies.

"And thou art passed away,
As a bright bird of passage from our land,
Yes, gentle spirit of our mother, say
Wilt thou forsake our band?

"If from the world above
The ministering saints and angels come,
Wilt thou not, mother, spread thy wings of love,
O'er this our home?"

The song ceased, and the sisters mingled their

affectionate tears and sympathies, as they clasped one another in a fond embrace. "She was such a mother," said Ellen, "and oh, Annie, does it not seem to you as though we had not loved her half enough?" "It does indeed, Ellen; all the kindness and duty and love I ever showed mamma seem nothing, whilst everything I ever did to pain her looks great indeed." "Ah, we see these things in another light over the closed grave. We have a father, oh! let us try and make him feel his loss less, for, Annie, what must that be?" At this moment the door opened, and Jane entered. "Young ladies," she said, "I scarcely know whether I ought to ask such a thing, but will you see Susan? your old nursemaid I mean; she called several times whilst my dear mistress was ill, and now she says if she can but see you she shall be contented." Susan was admitted. Many years had elapsed since the girls had seen her face, and it was little to be wondered at that they did not recognise her. Though they had sprung up from childhood to early youth, they were not more changed than she, and they sat gazing at her in astonishment till Susan herself broke silence. "I dare say you don't know me,

young ladies, and I am not surprised. I am grown older since we parted, so are you; but the years that have passed over you have been happy years. They have not whitened one hair in your heads, nor drawn one line across your brow; but I—oh! Miss Ellen"—Ellen pressed her hand affectionately, and begged her to explain herself. "It is long, Miss Ellen," said Susan, "since I have heard a kind voice, and I can hardly bear it. I—don't be frightened, dears—am just out of prison." "Of prison, Susan! for what? oh, impossible," said Annie, "what should you have done to deserve a prison?" "Much, Miss Annie, as you shall hear if you are not afraid to listen to so wicked a girl. I came first to this house about a fortnight back, to tell your dear mamma all my troubles, but I was denied, and yet I believe she would have seen me, for sin never seemed to make her hate the sinner: dear lady! oh, that I had seen her." This reference to their dear mother re-opened the torrent of the girls' grief, and for a few moments they sobbed aloud. "I cannot weep, Miss Ellen. It is long ago since my tears were dried, and I suppose I have no more to shed, and what good should tears do me? They will

not wash away my guilt, they will not bring back my good name. I envy you, young ladies, for you have stood by your dear mamma's dying pillow and have seen her die in peace and joy, no doubt. Mine died whilst I was in prison, and I loved her too, though, may be, if she had been a mother like yours, I too should have closed her eyes; but that is all over now." "But how is it, Susan," said Ellen, "that you should have fallen into such trouble and disgrace? Tell us; we cannot advise and help you as dear mamma would have done, but we can sympathise with you: come Susan, tell us all about it." "I don't know, young ladies, that my tale will do you any harm. I told Jane part of my history, and she was very loth I should see you. Jane was always over good for me, and she seemed to think my presence in the kitchen would do harm because I was just out of prison! Prison! ah, she is right, too. It is like a pest-house; she may well be afraid; but to you, dear young ladies, I would not say a word, nor breathe a breath, that should hurt you, Jane may rest assured of that; though I am wicked enough for most things, God knows."

The entrance of Miss Fellowes, who was come

to spend a few days during the Christmas holidays with her old pupils, put a stop to their further conversation, but Ellen went out to beg Jane and cook to make poor Susan as comfortable as possible in the kitchen till after tea, and then returned to Miss Fellowes.

"How kind of you to come!" said Ellen and Annie; "we did not expect you, though we said, and papa has said, how he wished you would. Aunt went home yesterday; she has a large family, and thought it would be no kindness to me to stop longer, as I had better get used to the housekeeping at once, but I fear I shall never be able to make a comfortable home for poor papa. My brothers too, poor fellows, I pity them, they will so miss mamma. Though from her long illness she had not been very active of late, still they could always go to her for advice and sympathy, and now they have no one." Miss Fellowes spoke hopefully to the mourning sisters, endeavouring to cheer and encourage them; and such was the influence of her few sincere and affectionate words, that they felt as though they could take courage to begin their new duties, and to set out as motherless girls on the journey of life. After tea was over, and their father had retired,

for his duties in a harassing business did not leave him much time to indulge in grief at home, Annie at once referred to the subject of Susan's visit, and soon interested their teacher in her case. Jane, who was clearing the tea things away at the time, asked permission to speak. "Ma'am," she said to Miss Fellowes, "I beg pardon, ma'am, but that is a very bad, deceitful girl. She was sent to prison for thieving, and her word never could be trusted, and never can. I should be sorry the young ladies should believe her tale. My poor mistress, the young ladies may have forgotten, sent her away for lying, and I assure you she is not improved since those days." "Indeed," said Miss Fellowes, "I should be very sorry that Misses Ellen and Annie should hear anything improper, but which of us, Jane, has not need of kindness and forbearance? Do not let us condemn her too severely. Do you remember that a holier than you or I said to the woman who was a sinner, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' and shall we assume greater wisdom than *His*?" Jane was silent and withdrew, and Miss Fellowes advised Ellen and Annie to ask Susan into the parlour again, and at least to hear her tale.

Susan's sojourn to the kitchen did not appear

to have softened her temper. The girls whose recollections of their nursemaid were that she was a sweet, gentle mannered, and obliging person, could scarcely believe that it was the same who now stood before them.

Her dress was mean and slatternly, and indicated a perfect recklessness, no less than the expression of her fast-closed lips and clouded brow. "I am come to see you, young ladies, not to beg, as cook says, (though God knows I need bread) I am come to look on you because I loved you, and because you are the children of one who never spoke a harsh truth, though she said many and many a kind one. I didn't know till I saw her empty chair that I had any spark of love left, they had near put it out in the kitchen, but my poor mistress and her gentle voice I can see and hear now; and oh, Miss Ellen, you who had such a mother, how good you ought to be!" "How is it, Susan," asked Annie, "that you are in such distress? Come, that we may help you if possible, tell us all about it." Thus encouraged the girl began: "I left your dear mamma's service, Miss, to go to live with a Mrs. Banyard, in the north: she was a stranger to your mamma, and I

do not think it was a good place for me. However, I did wrong when I had good example and good advice, so I don't think it would have made any difference. You know, I suppose, why I left here. It was because I did not keep to the truth, and used to indulge you in secret with reading books your mamma disapproved of." "Ah," interrupted Annie, "the 'Arabian Nights,' I remember." "Oh, not that book alone, Miss Annie; you may forget, but I do not, how many wrong things I allowed you to do, and your brother too, and then taught you to hide them. Poor master Edward, I often think it would have been far kinder of me to have set myself against his early evil ways, than, as I often did, conceal and encourage them. But I had not the good training you had, Miss Ellen; my mother, I remember, used often to say—'don't tell father so and so,' and I learned to conceal things from the time I was a child. Then we used to do so many wrong things, and hide them from her, that by degrees I grew very indifferent to truth, not in great things, perhaps, but in trifles, constantly.

"My first was a very good place. My mistress was patient with me, and instead of

being harsh when I went from the truth, she would take great pains to reason with me, and shew me the sin of my falsehood. I hoped I had overcome the sin of lying, for I lived with her some years, and had no other place till I came to you; but then I had few temptations. My mistress was almost always with me and the children, and, knowing my weakness, she was very careful not to tempt or expose me in any way. I wanted more wages than she thought it right to give me. I got a passion for dress, and was getting too fond of reading tales, which I obtained from a circulating library, kept by an acquaintance of mine. They had a very bad effect upon me; I was always dreaming and fancying myself in some other circumstances; and though my mistress believed the character true which she gave of me, it was far from correct. Still I meant to do well; I always intended to break myself of all habits of concealment, but I was so afraid of being found fault with—as a child I remember I was so. The fear of my father's anger used to make me deceitful, and I had the same fear of my mistress finding me out in a fault, so this made me a bad servant. Your dear mamma tried me a long while; I was

with you nearly three years as your nursemaid, but she was at last forced to give me up. It might have been better for me had your mamma told Mrs. Banyard about my fault, but she did not ask the question, and I suppose your mamma did not think it needful to tell. I was housemaid there; your mamma would not, she said, recommend me to take the charge of children again. It was a bad place for me. There was a large establishment, as many as seven servants in the kitchen, and I soon saw a great deal of evil. In this quiet house I had no temptations of that sort, there was only cook and Jane you know, Miss, and in my first place I had only one fellow-servant, so that the change in the life that I led in Yorkshire quite turned my head. I got fonder of dress, not more so than the others, but much finer than I had ever been before. Miss Ellen, I had better tell you no more; Jane was right, my tale is not fit for young ears like yours; and yet I don't know," continued Susan, "but it may be of use to you. It may be a warning to you, for if I had but kept to the truth, I never should have been in this trouble. We were very fond of novel reading in the kitchen, and what was worse, one of the maids

bought a packet of cards, and taught us to play. I lost a great deal of money by this means. Sometimes I won, but I then grew bold and lost it soon again. Then I began to feel the want of money, and I am ashamed to tell you that I often took little things that were not mine. The young ladies left money about frequently, and if I found a sixpence or a shilling when I swept their room, I used to keep it, not at first you know, Miss Ellen, but by degrees I got hard, and the lies I used to have to tell about it, made me harder still, till things became very bad. Every untruth I told made me worse, and soon my word could be taken for nothing. At last, after I had been there two years, a young gentleman, who was visiting at the house, told my master, at breakfast one morning, that he had met with a very uncomfortable circumstance. His pocket book, which he had carelessly left in his coat pocket, when he changed his dress for dinner the day before, had been robbed of a five-pound note; I remember I was just coming into the room when I heard the word *robbed*; and looked guilty enough, I dare say, for I knew I was a thief, though I never took *his* money. But who would believe me? The servants were all called up and questioned. They

none of them knew anything about it, nor did I. He was a very careless young man, and, I quite believe, lost the note, or spent it in some way which he forgot. However, he was, he said, certain he left fifteen pounds in the book, and now he had but ten. My boxes were searched with the rest, but my assurances of innocence were not believed. The cook told of my habits of pilfering, the under housemaid said I had put a shilling into my pocket, the other day, which was not mine, and then remembered she had seen me coming out of Mr. Worsley's room at a very unusual hour, when my work must have been done there. What would I have given then, young ladies, for a *good name?* for some kind mistress or friend to have appealed to? to have heard some one say *'I never knew her tell a lie?'* but no one who knew me, could say that. There were many things against me. I had bought a very expensive silk dress, unsuitable for a servant, and had bought it only the evening before; that was told and thought suspicious. I had been out late the same night with an acquaintance who did me no good; that looked bad; and it was true, too, that I had told an untruth to my mistress about it: but I never stole that money. I have been as bad I know,

as if I had, but I did not take it. My master was a violent man, and insisted on my being prosecuted. I was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, and I came out of York Castle only a fortnight ago. This is all I have to tell you, Miss Ellen; and now what am I to do? My mother is dead, and I have no one to help me; I had to beg the money to come back here of an old aunt of mine, and she can ill spare it; I have no one to give me a character for a place, and I have no character of my own. Oh, young ladies, what should a girl out of prison do for a place?"

Miss Fellowes, who had listened to Susan with great interest and kindness, now seriously asked her whether she felt penitence for her sin, either now or at any time of her imprisonment. "Yes, Ma'am," Susan replied, "I have been miserable enough, I'm sure." "There is no doubt of that, Susan, but the worst of men are often very miserable; I do not mean merely unhappy about the consequence of your sin, but really sorry before God; grieved that you have offended *Him*." Susan was silent. "I fear not," continued Miss Fellowes; "throughout your narrative I have not heard an expression which leads me to suppose

you are truly penitent. That you did not take the five-pound note, I can believe; but you have done many things as bad, and by your own confession your character was lost before that money was stolen. I want you to feel that in the sight of God you are very guilty." "Yes Madam," said Susan, "all you say is true, but I have forgotten the way to feel. I can't be sorry for anything now. I have been with many as bad and worse than myself, till I am grown hard, I suppose. And what would my sorrow avail me? Who will take a girl just out of prison? I see nothing left for me but to steal again. I wish they had transported me for life, that I do," said Susan, with a violent burst of grief, "for how shall I ever gain an honest living here?" "Where are you lodging?" inquired Miss Fellowes. "I am at my aunt's, Ma'am, who lives in this town, but she cannot keep me, and though her husband is only a journeyman bricklayer, he thinks it a disgrace to have me in the house. My brothers and sisters are all in service, and I would not for the world go near one of them, fallen as I am. My eldest sister sent me a little money to-day, which I paid my aunt directly, but she told me plainly

that I must get other lodgings, for my uncle could not bear it to be known I was there."

Miss Fellowes addressed a few more words of advice to the poor girl, and, taking her direction, promised to see her again, without, however, giving her much hope of assistance, and Susan took her leave with a heavy heart. "Oh, Miss Fellowes," said Annie, "What will poor Susan do?" "Indeed, Annie, I cannot tell, there are so few who would undertake a servant under such circumstances."

"But she does seem sorry," said Ellen; "I could not bear to see her misery; surely something can be done for her."

"I am by no means satisfied that Susan is sorry," replied Miss Fellowes; "it is not enough to feel unhappy, and distressed, and ashamed. Such sorrow as Susan feels, will never lead to amendment, for sorrow before man soon passes away, sorrow before God is another thing." The sisters were not convinced, but as Mr. Norris at that moment came in, the subject of conversation was changed. How far Miss Fellowes was correct in her judgment will be seen in poor Susan's subsequent history.

CHAPTER VI.

FAMILY SORROWS.

THE position of an elder sister in a family is at all times responsible, where there are brothers, especially so, and powerful may be her silent influence either for good or evil; I say *silent*, for few brothers like their sisters to give them much advice: and brothers are not singular in this respect. To administer advice in proper proportion and at proper times, requires such skill and experience, that few young persons are adequate to the task.

It is generally admitted by those who are anxious to do good, that it is far more difficult to speak a word of reproof or counsel to the members of their families than to strangers. There may be more than one cause for this. A consciousness of our own inconsistencies is, I believe, a very powerful one with many, and should, at least, teach us the great practical lesson of the importance of example.

Ellen Norris entered on her course, as head of her father's family, with warm affections, with a heart chastened by sorrow, and her modest and timid nature shrinking from the duties of her new life, but sincerely desiring to do and to be all her father required; to her younger brothers and sister, so far as possible, all that her mother had been—and self-denying, diligent, and faithful in all things. What did she then lack, may be asked? There was not, in her inmost soul, that grand motive for action without which all her efforts to do good and to be good must more or less be unavailing. One motive was wanting to Ellen's resolutions, which would have sanctified all others, and enabled her to fight against her besetting sins successfully, this spring of action was—LOVE TO GOD. A far more beautiful moral character than Ellen's would have been in constant peril without that love—hers was wrecked.

The elder brother of the Norrises had just left school, and was assisting his father in the counting house. He was a lad of promise, but as deficient in moral as he was remarkable for physical courage. He wanted the resolution to say "No." He was constantly led into evil, against which

his taste and conscience revolted, owing to this deficiency. His mother's influence and guidance were withdrawn at a critical time for Edward Norris. To his elder sister he was much attached; but he was sensible that her character was wanting in the very strength it needed, and on her, therefore, he could not lean. Strange is it that young hearts will not cry unto their Father in Heaven, "Be thou the guide of my youth;" that they will not, from very fear of the dangers of the voyage, seek a pilot, o'er an ocean where so many barks have been shipwrecked. Strange that they must *prove* its deceitfulness, and not till they have been tossed and broken, and their freshness and their beauty marred, will they offer themselves to him, who would have been a far gentler master in their youth, than the worldly tyrants to whom they bowed the neck. Alas! alas! that they had not earlier known the things which belonged to their peace.

"Edward, dear," said Annie one summer's day after dinner, "do be home in time to-night to walk with us. We are going to see poor old nurse's daughter, who is married, and come to live at Alton; she would so like to see you, Edward,

and it is a long walk for Ellen and me to go alone, so don't run out after tea in such a hurry, there's a dear fellow, but be polite for once in your life. Come promise us, Ned." "Well, I promise you, Annie, I will if that will do." "No, Edward," said Mr. Norris, "I think that will not do; you seem to consider it sufficient to promise, but the *performance* of your promise will alone satisfy your sister." "Why, father, of course I mean to perform my promise," said Edward, warmly, "I always do. Sometimes I am prevented, you know." "It is easy to satisfy yourself in this way, Edward, but the persons whom you so often disappoint may be excused for looking at the matter in another light. If I promised you your quarterly allowance, fully meaning to pay you, do you think you should be satisfied with an excuse instead of the money, at the end of the quarter? and when this non-fulfilment of my promise took place, not once, but again and again, would you respect me, or be merciful to such a breach of promise?" Edward would not answer; and it being now time to return to the counting-room, no further conversation took place on the subject.

Tea time came, and Annie looked anxiously to

the door, but in vain. "Do you expect your brother?" inquired her father. "Yes, papa, I always do," said Annie, cheerfully; "you know it is a pity to meet trouble half way, so I always hope that Ned will perform his promises."

"What is it that Edward is so much engaged in just now? surely he is not always at cricket, which is his common excuse to me for his absence." "I don't know, I am sure, papa," said Annie, "he never tells me where he goes." "Does he tell you, Ellen?" asked her father. "I have never asked him, papa," was the equivocal reply. "Well, my dear, then were I in your place I should ask him; I am quite sure he is not satisfied with his conduct, whatever it is. I think an elder sister may be very well excused for asking her brother's confidence."

To their surprise, Edward at this moment appeared, and Annie, delighted at his redeeming his word, said, "there, papa, he is come, you see!" A more unfortunate time for rejoicing could not be, for Edward was flushed, and extremely annoyed that he had been made the subject of conversation, or his weakness animadverted on during his absence. "Well," said he, "as I am

always to be distrusted, I shall take care to make no promise in future, and I shall be rather more slow in obliging you than I have been."

The tea was not a very happy meal after this speech, and was concluded without much conversation. After it was over, and during the walk, there was still a cloud on Edward's brow, and Ellen and Annie felt how little pleasure there was in the unwilling company of their brother. At last Ellen broke silence. "Edward," she said, "what is it you are always after of an evening? Papa is quite uncomfortable about it, for he cannot believe, he says, that you spend all your time at cricket, and you are so very late sometimes, Edward dear. Now do tell me if there is anything wrong, pray do." "Why, Ellen, there is nothing wrong, and, but that you are all so nervous, I would have told you before. I go down to the water sometimes with the Middletons, and I know if papa were to hear of it, he would fidget himself and you too. George Middleton is teaching me to row, and now you have all the secret, and a great one it is." "If that is all then, Edward, may I tell papa so, next time he asks me? I knew you had sometimes been on the

water, for Jane told me she had seen you, but oh, Edward, I should be very miserable if I thought you went to the tea gardens, and places where I know the young Middletons are seen so much. I wish you were not so fond of them. I don't think they will do you any good. But now Edward there is one thing which you must promise me. Promise that you will never take the boys there. Oh, if anything were to happen to either Willy or Frank, you would never forgive yourself. Pray Edward never take either of them." Edward promised, and at the time he thought he was sincere, for as he looked on his younger brothers sporting before them in all their boyish innocence and glee, he felt that he could not lead them astray. But weak is love, and weak is resolution without principle. Edward Norris found it so.

Of all Mr. Norris's children there was not one who had entwined himself round the heart of every member of the household so closely as little Willy. He was one of those bright loving children who shed sunshine around the path, and joy and gladness wherever they go. "I don't know how it is," the grave cook used to say,

"but the sight of that dear Willy's face, even when he is a little troublesome, and runs away with my rolling pin, and makes cakes of his own out of my dough, always turns away my anger."

I wish I could be angry with Willy sometimes," said Jane, "the dirt he brings in! but then he always looks in my face with those dear blue eyes of his, and says, 'Oh Jane, I am sorry,' and who can scold such a boy? Then he never tells a story, and often bears blame for Frank, I believe. Oh bless master Willy, he was his mother's darling I know, and as like mistress as possible."

If Willy had an idol it was his brother Edward. "What are you looking at yourself in the glass for?" asked Ellen of Willy one day. "Why, Ellen, dear, I am looking to see where I am like Edward, Mrs. Raynes says I grow just like him. Oh, I wish I did! He is very beautiful, and good, too; don't you think so, Ellen?" Ellen sighed; she had been sitting up the previous night for her brother, and answered the little questioner with a sad smile. "Well, I hope when I am as old, I shall be as good, that's all, Ellen. Look here! Ned has rigged me my boat, and I am going to the little pond, only the little pond down the

village, to swim it, but not if you don't like, Ellen, you know I won't if you tell me not." "Oh yes, Willy, you may go to the little pond by Mr. Fox's house; but I wish you were not so fond of ships and boats, Willy. I don't want you to be a sailor." "Ah that's because you are a girl, a woman, I suppose I should say," said Willy, merrily. "However, I shan't go to sea in *this* cutter, and, as Annie says, there'll be time enough to think about trouble when it comes."

"Come along, Frank, we have no lessons to do to-day. I am glad holidays are come." As the boys ran off with their boat, Ellen's eyes filled with tears. That they thus early in boyhood should have lost a mother, was to her so inexpressibly painful, that sometimes the very gladness of Willy's laugh would touch her to the quick, so deep was her anxiety that he at least might not lose his guiltlessness in an evil and treacherous world.

Edward's boating excursions had been continued and prolonged to a late hour for some nights past. Mr. Norris, whose business demanded considerable travelling, was at this time absent, on a fortnight's journey, and Ellen had weakly

consented to sit up for her brother, contrary both to her judgment and her conscience. She had more than once expostulated with him, she had often entreated him to desist from his evil courses, if not for his own, at least for *her*, sake. She had even ventured to point out to him the sin of such deceit, but where was her strength in these reproofs? Had she not herself prevaricated; had she not herself told more than one untruth, not only to hide his, but her own delinquencies? Edward did not say this, but he felt it, and she knew that he felt it whenever she touched on the point. Thus had the sister, with all the sister's love warm in her bosom, weakened her power of influencing this wayward brother for good. She had covered his faults, and it was now in vain to endeavour to turn him.

Mr. Norris was not in circumstances to warrant any increase in the expense of his family, or he would undoubtedly have sought the assistance of some judicious superintendent of his household. Yet, to common observers, this was not needful: Ellen was far from thoughtless. She was a good manager, and, for a girl scarcely seventeen, as judicious and economical as could possibly be

expected. Cook and Jane were old and trusty servants, and the boys were at school all day; and Mr. Norris felt the very natural antipathy, common to many men in his circumstances, to the sight of any one in *her* place, which to his heart could never more be filled.

Neither of the girls were particularly inclined to visiting. Annie indeed might, had circumstances permitted, have been disposed to enter into the amusements of fashionable life, but they lived at some distance from London, in a quiet country town, and had formed few acquaintances likely to lead them into gaiety. Mr. Norris was what is called an easy man; he was by no means deficient in principle or feeling, but he had been for so many years immersed in business, and in the cares of providing for a young family and a delicate wife, that it had not occurred to him that the charge of his children formed any part of *his* duty. He loved them dearly, but he had little time to study their characters, and Ellen, with her neat dress and pleasing person, lady-like manners and gentle temper, he thought fully adequate to the care of house and children, assisted, as she was, by experienced and valuable servants. Edward

was but fifteen, and had just left school, his father's circumstances requiring his assistance in the business. Willy and Frank, about nine and eight years old, were not cause for much anxiety at present; they went to a day school, and their sisters were kind and good to them. Of this he was satisfied, and thus do many loving parents satisfy themselves. They start at last when they see great evils, but they have not watched for the *first indications* of the heart's disease. Well may we sound the alarm to parents, "*watch ye.*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISIT AND ITS SAD SEQUEL.

LEAVING the graver matters of our story, let us see how Ellen and Mary acted in the society to which their age and the well known characters of their parents now gave them access. Many persons in the town and neighbourhood were interested in the motherless girls; some, who had known and loved their mother, proved themselves very valuable friends to the Norrises. Their notice, and occasional counsel, especially that of Mrs. Marshall, Mary's mother, who resided in the same town, was gratefully received. Others there were, more friendly in profession, but in reality only inquisitive and censorious visitors, who would either affront the girls by invidious and unfeeling remarks upon their management and household arrangements, or would, after praising them in a morning call, straightway inveigh against them at a gossiping neighbour's; such is the *world's*

friendship. There was no very warm intimacy between the Marshalls and Norrises, that is to say, between the young people; Ellen and Annie thought Mary a very good girl, but, as they expressed it, "could not get on with her." Nor could they; Mary could never let Annie's tongue get on beyond the truth, without gravely remonstrating; nor could she bear to see Ellen's wavering and uncandid conduct any more than in their school days.

Mary Marshall was on a morning visit to the Norrises, assisting Ellen and Annie to cut out some work, and altering some old dresses into the present fashion. Economy was an object to both families, and it was not often that they consulted any other dress-maker than a woman who had worked for them in childhood, and used to come occasionally to assist in the more abstruse parts of the young ladies' mantua-making. They were very busy, cutting and contriving, when a double knock was heard, and down went the scissors out of Ellen's hand. Mary looked for an explanation, whilst Annie, who had taken a private survey of the callers, exclaimed, "Why, it is the Miss Ansons! oh Ellen! what shall we do? this is

sweeping day, and the drawing room is all in confusion, besides Jane cannot bear to be interrupted. All these things must be taken upstairs." "Why," said Mary, quietly picking up a few pieces of paper which gave the floor an untidy appearance, "what are you ashamed of?" "Oh, I should not like the Miss Ansons to see all this," said Ellen, so gathering silks and lining hastily together she ran out of the room with them, leaving Annie to apologise as well as she could for the remains of the dress-making apparatus.

The Miss Ansons were what is termed fashionable young ladies, and though by no means ill-natured girls, had a certain weakness of head, rather, it is to be hoped, than a badness of heart, which made them dreadfully afraid of being thought to know anything in the world that was useful, or what they would have called commonplace. Ellen and Annie were quite right in their fears. Had the Miss Ansons known that the neatly-dressed Miss Norrises made the greater part of their own garments, they would have honoured their door with no more double knocks; but they were at present in ignorance of this vulgarity in their friends, and having only lately

returned from school, and being rather in want of society, set up for patronesses where they could, and *friends* where they might. To their *superiors*, superiors I mean in their own estimation, (a superiority rather difficult to define, by the bye,) they were very conciliating, or, as Mary Marshall said, *obsequious*. To their *inferiors*, that is to say to those who did not drive a carriage, nor go to town every season, nor dine at six o'clock, &c., &c., they were patronising. To Mary Marshall's class they were distant but *respectful*.

"We have called very early," observed the elder Miss Anson affectedly, "but we come to ask you to join a party at our house on Thursday and we are so afraid of losing you, that we were determined to come ourselves and hear your reply at once. Where is your sister, Miss Annie?"

Annie, who was scarcely recovered from the perturbation which the effects of the double knock, under such perplexing circumstances, had caused, said first that she did not know, and then that she would go and see, and left the visitors in amazement at Miss Annie Norris's want of breeding.

The *truest* politeness is ever found with the

simple-hearted. The cottage wife, who, at the entrance of a lady, with a slight apology goes on with her ironing or her mending, thus showing her visitor that she does not disturb her, but is truly welcome, is far more polite than many a flurried mistress of a mansion, who, not being quite in the dress she would have chosen, or in the smartest parlour in her house, or perhaps busied with housekeeping cares, lets her caller see by her very absence of employment, and the flutter which she cannot disguise, that the visit is not exactly àpropos, and that her thoughts are far away in the kitchen, dressing room, or nursery. When Ellen and Annie returned to the parlour, their visitors renewed the invitation, which was eagerly accepted by Annie, but with some hesitation by Ellen.

Mr. Norris had too much sense to desire for his daughters an introduction into such society, where their ambition would be excited, whilst their intelligence, and growth in all that would make them useful and beloved sisters, daughters, or friends, would receive no advancement. Ellen had repeatedly heard her father express a dislike to the acquaintance, and felt a difficulty during his

absence in complying with the vociferous requests of the Miss Ansons, who, as it is the fashion with young ladies to do, under such circumstances, expressed far more anxiety and desire than the occasion actually demanded. Ellen and Annie had never been taught to dance, and the fear of appearing singular, in the event of dancing at the Ansons', rather damped the zeal of both sisters upon further consideration. "Now, Miss Norris, may we expect you?" said Miss Anson, almost tired of the vacillation of Miss Norris, whose only replies were, "You are very kind;" and "I should enjoy it exceedingly;" "Will you allow me to leave it uncertain?" "I am not quite sure that we are disengaged;" "Let me think;" &c. "Oh, we shall expect you, remember," said Miss Anson; "at seven o'clock we meet. It is early, but mamma thought, as some of our guests live at a distance, it would be better than a later hour." "Miss Marshall," turning to Mary, "I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you." Mary hesitated; not that she had any doubt about refusing the invitation, but because she was combating with her excessive dislike to the Ansons, and endeavouring to compose a respectful and

lady-like refusal. "You are very kind," she replied, "but I cannot accept the invitation." "Why?" asked the younger Miss Anson, "are you engaged?" "Oh, dear, no," said Mary, smiling, "I have very few engagements, but I could not make one without asking mamma first, and therefore I must refuse." The Miss Ansons here declared their intention of calling on Mrs. Marshall, had they not seen Mary, but Mary quietly begged them not to give themselves that trouble. Her mamma's opinion she knew, and her own was happily the same, that visiting of this kind for her was out of the question. Neither her circumstances nor tastes made her a fit associate for the fashionable, and that as dancing was quite out of her line she did not go into company knowingly, where she must be a check on the amusement of others, or obliged to sit and look on at that which was uninteresting to her. "Do you think dancing wrong, then, Miss Marshall?" inquired Miss Fanny Anson. "For you, Miss Fanny, or for myself?" said Mary. "For myself, a wise mother has judged, by never allowing me to learn; for you, *your* mamma has judged, and I have nothing to do with the matter." The

Miss Ansons, quite puzzled by this answer, so unlike the replies of their acquaintances generally, thought Mary was a very odd girl, and soon took their leave.

The work was resumed, and Ellen was greatly discomfited to find that on the back of the sofa lay a width of silk, which, in the hurry of removal, they had not observed. "Well, suppose the Miss Ansons had seen you at work, what then?" said Mary. "Oh, I don't mind," replied Annie, "but you would not, I think, have liked it yourself." "I tell you, Annie, what I should have disliked still more; that Miss Anson should have supposed I spent large sums at a dress-maker's, when I knew that my father, to enable him to go on in business, was obliged to get accommodated at Mr. Anson's bank." Ellen and Annie blushed; they could not tell but that *their* father was in similar circumstances, which indeed was the fact. Now came the trouble of *dress*. There was little time to prepare new clothes, for to-day was Monday, and on Thursday was the party at Mr. Anson's. Many times did Ellen wish that she had not yielded, and felt half disposed to refuse even now; but Annie would not go alone, and that she would decline she could not hope.

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The day came; and the sisters, in their neat white muslin dresses, were in the heated drawing room of Mr. Anson. Mrs. Anson received them kindly; she had somewhat more discernment than her daughters, and was quite capable of perceiving that there was a native gentility in the Miss Norrises which was by no means a disgrace to her society. The evening was spent in much the same way as such evenings usually are. "Do not you dance?" was asked more than once of each sister, and the reply each time was given with that feeling of *mauvaise honte* which rather inspired contempt than respect. At last the carriages came round, and Ellen and Annie returned home, trying to think that they had spent a very delightful evening, but secretly tired and disgusted with the whole affair.

Edward was out as usual. The evening was fine, and the rowing had more charms for him than ever. Weary and irritable, the sisters prepared for bed. Jane, who had met them at the door, stood in the entrance of the parlour, looking very uncomfortable. At last she said, "Miss Norris, cook is gone out to look after Master Edward, but that is not the worst. He took Willie out for a walk with him to-night, and

though it is twelve o'clock they are not yet back. There is a grand rowing match to-day, and I am afraid he has taken little Willy with him to see it; but oh, Miss Ellen, what will my master say?" "How could you, Jane," Ellen began, "how could you let him go?" "How could I refuse, Miss Ellen? You know he often has been out with Master Edward, and he seemed so dull when you were out, that I was glad Master Edward offered to take him. Frank is in bed and asleep, he did not care to go, he said; let's hope no harm will come of it."

It seemed as if Jane's wishes were fulfilled, for at this moment Edward and Willy came in. Ellen, in her thankfulness at seeing the child again, forebore to reproach her brother for the lateness of the hour till Willy was safe in bed, and then returned to ask him how he could think of such a thing, as to keep so young a child out till after midnight. Edward made very light of it, but Ellen could see that he was uneasy. Long after the others were in bed and asleep the sister might be seen bending over the flushed and excited little boy, who was so full of the oars, and the boat, and the music, and the water, that he

could not compose himself to sleep. He had seen them play bowls, too, he said, and Mr. Middleton had promised to teach him one day, and so he ran on, little thinking that every word he spoke was pain to his anxious sister. At length he slept, but the sleep was not refreshing, and Ellen dare not leave him. On going to the window to draw down the blind, that the morning sun, which was now rising, might not awake the sleeper, her eye fell upon a little coat, which she did not recognise as her brother's. Suddenly the whole truth flashed upon her. Had Willy been in the water? His excitement and feverishness, and the pain in his head, of which he complained, were then fully accounted for. She ran to Edward's room, and Edward confessed he had had a wetting, by one of the Middletons imprudently jumping into the boat on one side, just as they were landing; but they had borrowed clothes for him, and hoped he would be none the worse. But he was the worse. The excitement in itself was too much for Willy, and the remaining in wet clothes, after being excessively heated, had brought on a violent cold attended with fever, and before twenty-four hours had elapsed, the

absent father was summoned to his child's bedside. It was not a time for reproach, for the self-reproaches of brother and sister, were sufficient. Day by day the fever raged on; the little bright-eyed boy, in his delirium, was ever calling on Edward to come and look at the white sails of his ship on the blue sea, and to watch him climb the mast so gallantly; and now to see the land afar off, where he would go, (such had been his dream in health) the land where such fine birds lived, he saw them now; and then he was on the sea again, and the ship was coming home! home! and such presents he had for papa, and Ellen, and Ned. Then he came to himself awhile, and wearily said he could not hear the water splash now, he wished he could, for he was hot and thirsty. He asked to hear his hymns, and listened with great joy to the favourite one of his mother's, beginning

> Why those fears, behold 'tis Jesus
> Holds the helm, and guides the ship,

when he asked to be turned round, and saying gently, "I shall never go to sea now, Ned," sank asleep, and so died.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FAITHFUL FRIEND.

IT is a grand fallacy, and one into which our deceitful hearts are peculiarly liable to fall, that sorrow or trial, in its various forms, is, in itself, useful discipline. People are too apt to suppose that affliction has some sort of mysterious efficacy, of which those who endure it necessarily partake. Thus you hear the poor, especially, speak of their poverty and suffering here, almost as a kind of temporary injustice, for which they shall be repaid hereafter. And not the poor alone, though they, in their simplicity, give utterance to feelings in which the rich participate. Persons who have been greatly bereaved, or otherwise afflicted, who have learned that affliction is one of the means of the Creator's discipline to his creatures, are too apt to sit down quietly beneath the rod, as though the suffering in itself was sufficient to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness,

but this is not the intent of Him who never sends a chastisement without a deep cause. It would be well, indeed, for the afflicted to seek that cause, meekly acknowledging His wisdom who seeth the end from the beginning. Truly they need look no further than their own hearts, for an answer to many of the dealings of the Most High; the humble will not fail to discern there some lurking corruption, to correct which needed just those means which their Father hath used.

"Oh Mary! Mary! I little thought of this trial," said poor Ellen, as she stood with Mary Marshall at little Willy's coffin. "He looked so well, so life like, but ten days ago. My beautiful, my darling Willy! I shall never forget this lesson. If I had been at home, Willy would not have gone out with Edward, and all this trouble would have been spared us. Oh, Mary, how safe it is to do what is right! Had I done so, I should not have to weep over Willy's coffin. Oh, that I had never gone to that party! surely this will be a lesson to me." "Dear Ellen," said Mary "it will not be so if you trust in *it*. Trust in Him who speaks to you by this means, and who only can give you strength to overcome in the hour of

weakness. Will you not, by little Willy's coffin, ask God to be your teacher, that you may learn all that this lesson is meant to teach? Do, dear Ellen."

Thus spoke Mary Marshall, who, true in the time of sorrow as she was in joy, needed no other attraction to her friend's house than the knowledge that they were in affliction, and at the earliest intimation of Willy's illness had hastened to assist them with all her warm and true hearted affection, burning brighter in her woman's breast because the object of it suffered. Mary had but little experience, but she could see that Ellen was deficient in her view of the ends for which affliction was sent. She could not, as her mother, or as Miss Fellowes, perhaps, still better would have done, point out the error of her friend; but with earnest and simple sincerity she took occasion to direct Ellen's broken heart to the fact, that as affliction doth not spring out of the dust, so there was a cause for this.

"Yes," said Ellen in agony, "I know it, I feel it. It is a judgment on me for my leaving home, and for my so often encouraging Edward in deceit and falsehood." "Ellen dear," said Mary, "I was

a very little girl when my mamma taught me that the end, the motive for correction was my *good.* She never punished me in the spirit of *revenge.* Her punishments, indeed, were always less severe when my fault was against herself, and never were harsh or revengeful in any way. If I did wrong, and she had to take away any of my enjoyments, or to send me away from her presence, she did it to make me think how ungrateful, and disobedient, and foolish I had been; but the lesson which she taught me at the same time was this, that she corrected me for my profit as God corrects his children. Not as a tyrant, unjustly; nor as an angry monarch, revengefully; but just to bring me to milder, kinder, and holier thoughts and feelings. Now I have never forgotten that lesson of mamma's. I never hear of God's taking away a father from his children, or a child from its parent, but I think of it just as I did of mamma's corrections. I was always naughty when she corrected me, and yet she loved me; so with God's dealings. Depend on it, Ellen, we do wrong in so much looking upon God's reproof and correction as terrible judgments. They are rather intended as checks and warnings. If

Willy had not died, how long might not Edward and you have gone on in concealment and sin. It may be that God saw that nothing short of taking away your darling brother would stop you in your course. Better that Willy should go to heaven in childhood, than that you and Edward should go on to live so as to spend your eternity in hell. How kind in Him, that, instead of cutting off your eldest brother in sin, sending him unprepared, with a lie in his mouth, to the grave, He should have taken little Willy, before bad example had tainted him, and as soon as ever Edward began to lead him into evil, thus for ever to remove him from it to the safety of His own bosom. Think of this, Ellen." Mary had spoken so earnestly that she had not heard the gentle step of Edward and Annie, who had come together to look at the lovely remains of their little brother. Thus we linger o'er the casket from whence we know the jewel has been withdrawn, as though the spirit had left some portion of its essence in the cold clay, to which our souls cling, with fond and longing regret, until buried out of sight; and we learn, by slow degrees, to transfer our affections from the mortal to the spiritual, and to think of

our beloved ones, not as in the grave, but as in the skies.

The sister's felt that part of Mary's speech which alluded to Edward very keenly. They felt it for him, and thought it almost hard. They felt for Mary, too, thinking how sorry she would be that Edward was an unknown hearer of her sentiments. What was their surprise, then, to see Mary step to the other side of the little coffin where Edward stood, and with a modest, but firm voice, ask him to forgive her if she had wounded him: but, as she said, the sight of death took away reserve; the opinions of others, by the side of the grave, were almost disregarded where the judgment of mortals was of so little value, where all things in time seemed of no worth compared with those of eternity. "Will it not be a lesson to *you*, Edward?" asked Mary earnestly; "we have known one another since we were children, and I cannot but feel anxious for you at this critical time of your life, when God has sent you such a message as this. Do not disregard it." They were all three deeply affected; and all felt at that moment as though grief had truly changed them, and as though they

needed nothing more to turn them aside from folly and sin than the sight of Willy in his last and narrow bed. Let us leave them there for awhile.

CHAPTER IX.

MARY AT HOME.

IT is difficult, in sketches of human character, to avoid the extremes of contrast. Whilst we portray the beauty and excellence of certain virtues on the one hand, and the deformity of vice on the other, it is natural for young readers to imagine the triumphs of the good, easy and natural; and the failures of the bad, unfortunate rather than criminal. To Mary Marshall it was not always easy to speak the truth; it required courage, self-denial, and sacrifice. It did not at all times make her appear, in the eyes of the world, lovely or attractive: she often, indeed, suffered severely in comparison with many less sincere and less sterling characters; not in the estimation of those who truly loved and admired the principle which she maintained, but it was not every one who saw the necessity for speaking and acting so truthfully, under every circumstance, as Mary

Marshall did. That my readers may not suppose Mary's path was at all times so very smooth and easy—let them accompany her to a few scenes in her simple and uneventful life; and see how it required, even there, a bold heart and unflinching firmness to "dare to be true."

Mary's mother was absent from home on a visit to some relations, and on her eldest daughter devolved, for the first time, the management of the family and household. The servants were not numerous, it is true. An old cook, and one other servant, formed Mrs. Marshall's establishment, and with eight children, it is not to be supposed there was much time in that busy house for leisure or visiting. Mary received her directions from her mother on the evening before her departure with mingled feelings. To be left for six weeks her own mistress, had some charms for a girl of seventeen; and she had been so accustomed to manage her younger brothers, that they would, she knew, be good and tractable. "But the servants, mamma; suppose Anne should not mind me—I never find her very willing to listen to my hints, and I had rather manage anything in the world than a servant." "The less, my dear," said Mrs.

Marshall, "you appear to manage any of the household, the better; go on quietly, let your orders be few, but see that they are attended to."

If any young person thinks Mary's six weeks of liberty enviable, they have certainly never tried the task of managing, as Mary called it, the servants of a father's house. At first, all went on very smoothly. Mary had nothing to find fault with, and consequently, neither Anne nor cook had any cause of grievance. One afternoon, however, Anne, whose business it was to walk out with the two youngest children before tea, was not home for nearly an hour after her time. Mary was obliged to speak of this, and asked where she had been. Anne informed her, very coolly, that she had been shopping, and on Mary's begging that it might not occur again, she bounced out of the room, leaving Mary in some anxiety. "I know," she said, "mamma values Anne; if I offend her, I fear she will give warning, and yet, how can I let her do wrong without telling her of it? I wish I knew mamma's secret, she never seems to give offence by her reproofs, I generally do." Her papa, to whom the young housekeeper's complaints were addressed, smiled on his daughter

and said, "Oh, Mary, it is a secret I think very few possess, but never mind, my girl, go on, you will find it out in time."

"Be so kind as not to boil the beef quite so much to-day, cook, papa complained of it, and my brothers left it on Saturday." "Well, Miss Mary, if I don't know how to boil a piece of beef, 'tis time I should; perhaps you will come and do it yourself," was the gracious reply.

"What should I have said?" thought poor Mary again! "Papa did not seem pleased with his dinner, and I am sure mamma would have spoken; now what should I have said? I wonder how Ellen Norris manages cook and Jane; but perhaps they have not such dreadful tempers as our maids. Oh dear, it is no treat to be housekeeper, I see."

Nor were the maids alone her trials. Callers came; and it was hard for Mary's temper to hear their inquisitive remarks. She had no notion of their interference, she said, and perhaps did not at all times take sufficient pains to disguise this from them.

Mrs. Mordan, a widow lady, who lived opposite, and who was a great "manager," called to give the inexperienced girl a little of her advice. Mary

held Mrs. Mordan in high veneration; her mother always treated her with great respect, and she was aware that they were in some way indebted to Mrs. Mordan's generosity and kindness. But Mrs. Mordan had her imperfections, and one of these was too great a love of dictating, or, as she would have called it, advising. "Well, Mary, I am come to see how you get on. Does Jane go on nicely? I hope she is obedient to you." "Oh, I get on as well as I expected," said Mary. "I shall be very glad when mamma comes home, for I don't know the secret yet of managing a household." "I will tell you," said Mrs. Mordan, "be *strict*, never allow them to answer you, that is my rule. I never allow a reply." Mary thought she should not like to be Mrs. Mordan's maid on those terms, but she had discretion enough not to say so, and only remarked that she should think it rather hard not to be allowed to defend herself. "We may find fault unjustly you know, Mrs. Mordan." "Ah, my dear, you talk like a child; I tell you servants have no business to reply at all, but I am come to tell you that I would not allow visitors in the kitchen. I saw a man come out of your back door last night; it is your duty

to inquire into the matter, my dear." Mary's brother John, who was writing in the room at the time, lifted up his eyes and laughed. "I am the man, Mrs. Mordan; it is well you did not ask cook; how angry she would have been! I dressed up last night to see if cook would find me out, and she did not; she let me in, because I pretended I came from Mr. Norris, with a note for Mary. Mary, you look grave; was there any harm in it?" "I don't like those plays, John; it is never a pleasure to me to succeed in taking any one in, and I hope you won't play them any more. You see this might have made great mischief, as such jokes often do."

Mrs. Mordan, seeing that her interference was not needed, now asked Mary if she would join a party at her house, with her brothers, on the following evening, as she had a treat in store for them, but what, she would not say. Mary accepted it with pleasure, for she knew her mother's confidence in Mrs. Mordan, and they had often been to her house before.

The afternoon was a lovely one in August. The boys were to have a holiday, and the little fellows were delighted with the prospect of visiting Mrs.

Mordan. She had always abundance of amusement for children of all ages, and her large gardens and pleasure grounds alone, were a treat to children whose indulgences were but limited. They arrived at Mrs. Mordan's house at five o'clock, the hour appointed, and there were carriages already at the door, and the hall full of merry young people, who welcomed the young Marshalls with great glee. They were universally beloved, for their open manners and good humoured dispositions at once inspired confidence and trust. Such a family of boys, high spirited, clever children too, to be so manageable and well behaved, was the universal wonder of all less happy mothers, who found their two or three sons more trouble than Mrs. Marshall's eight.

"Where are we going, madam?" asked Mary of Mrs. Mordan, who was standing in the hall, giving orders about large packages of refreshments to a footman. "We are going to Tuck's wood to tea, my dear, by the water; I have engaged two sailing boats for the purpose, and we shall have a charming afternoon." "Oh, capital!" called out the young Marshalls, "we have not been on the water for a long time: thank you, Mrs. Mordan." Mary

looked distressed, and yet she felt that the present was not a time to hesitate. "Thank you, madam, oh, thank you; but we must not go." "Not go! my dear, why, what did you come for?" "You did not say, ma'am, that you were going on the water; if you had, I dare not have accepted your invitation." "Are you afraid of the water?" asked Miss Anson. "Not in the least, Miss Anson." "Why will you not go then?" "Because mamma would be miserable at this moment if she knew that I thought of such a thing. After Willy Norris died, mamma said she hoped none of her boys would ever love the water—none of my brothers care about it yet, and I would not have them begin while my mother is away." "My dear girl," said Mrs. Mordan, "I hope you don't mean to persist in refusing. Do you suppose I would lead you into harm? Every care shall be taken of you." "I do not doubt it, ma'am, but I dare not go." Mrs. Mordan now looked displeased. "Well then your elder brothers will go at least." "No ma'am, I hope not; they know that I am in their mother's place, in her absence, and they will not go, I am sure."

The boys looked grievously disappointed. The

young people, with one accord joined their entreaties to Mrs. Mordan's. "Miss Marshall is so very good," said one of the Miss Ansons. "I suppose she thinks the air of the Tea Gardens we shall pass will taint her." "No," said Mary, warmly, "I think there are more things to fear than the taint of the Tea Gardens." "The company is not select enough for Miss Marshall; she considers dancing a sin, and would not even dance on a green any more than in a ball-room." "Come, come, Miss Marshall," said Mrs. Mordan, "I should hope your mamma knows me well enough to believe I would not tempt you to do wrong. There can be no harm in your going under safe conduct like mine.—Now, James, are the carriages ready?—I have hired one on purpose for your party, and am surprised at your unpoliteness in refusing." Cries of "What a shame!" "How absurd, how rude!" did not move Mary, who again respectfully declined going.

"John," she said to her eldest brother, a boy of fifteen, "if you knew how sorry I am to disappoint you, you would pity me; do come home, dear." "Why, Mary," replied John, "I think this is being over particular; mamma did not

forbid it." "How could she forbid this particular thing, John? She never knew of Mrs. Mordan's intentions. You know her general prohibition, and you, at least, are old enough to understand that we must attend to her wishes, even when they are not expressed." Happy are the children whose consciences have been rightly trained. John's conscience, thus appealed to, was at once convinced. With a sigh, he said, "Well, you are right I dare say: come along, boys," and there was dignity in John's submission. He was not abashed by the laugh which went round the little circle at his expense, for being governed by his sister. He was a merry boy, and said, "Ah, laugh away, we are all under petticoat government now, you know, so there is no fun in that joke. Come, Mary dear. Tears in your eyes! what next I wonder!" "I am not crying, John, for myself, but for your disappointment. You have acted so kindly, so nobly; but for your help I could not have brought all the children away so easily; oh, thank you John, you are my true friend always."

I will not say that the little boys were quite as calm in giving up their promised treat as their

elder brother and sister; but the evening was a very happy one. The father, who was just sitting down to tea on their return, and expressed some surprise at their appearance, took them a pleasant walk into the beautiful country, and they all agreed that a land frolic with quiet consciences, was after all better than a water frolic with hearts ill at ease.

On the mother's return how glad was the meeting, how sweet the commendation of Mary's housewifely skill, and how merrily they talked over the maid's threatened rebellion and Mary's alarm, as of troubles past; but they were silent about Mr. Mordan's visit. It was only from the father that Mrs. Marshall learned of the steadfast resistance of Mary and John against that which they feared she would disapprove, and it was with a thankful heart that Mary's mother acknowledged to her the next morning her grateful sense of the tenderness of her child's conscience, which could enable her to resist temptation and forego pleasure, to bear sarcasm, and act in her absence as she would have done in her presence.

Mothers, would you have that joy? You must train your children as Mary's mother trained

her; let them say of you what Mary once wrote of her mother to Miss Fellowes: "I never heard mamma make any excuse or equivocation on any account whatever. I never knew her say those *polite* lies which so many people speak in common conversation. From a little child I can remember my entire confidence in mamma. If my medicine were nasty she never told me it was nice. If a lesson were difficult she never cheated me into the belief that it was easy. I was a little girl of nine years old when my nurse gave me, by mistake, some medicine which was not intended for me, and then, terrified at what she had done, cried out that she had poisoned me. I was dreadfully frightened; I cried and screamed in agony. The doctor was sent for and assured me that the medicine would make me sick, but would not hurt me; that, indeed, I was not poisoned. I did not believe him, because when he once wanted to draw a tooth for me he pretended he was only going to feel if it were loose. I did not believe the nurse, because she once put a powder into my gingerbread, and had several times deceived me in little things. So I still screamed, and cried, and shook with terror, till

the doctor himself was alarmed, and said I might hurt myself by my excessive agitation. Mamma at length came in, and sadly frightened she looked for a minute. I shall never forget my relief when I asked her if I were poisoned, to hear her say, 'No, my dear, no; you are *not*.' I laid my head on her shoulder and looked up into her eye to read there what I never failed to read—*the truth*, and I was satisfied in an instant. All that the doctor had said, or that the nurse had said, failed; but my mother's assurance was enough. Her yea was yea and her nay was nay."

CHAPTER X.

YOUNG LADIES' GOSSIP.

THE grief had passed away, the young hearts which had truly felt at Willy's grave as though they could never more beat gladly, were, six months after the death of the boy, almost as thoughtless and gay as ever. But the affliction had not answered the ends for which it had been sent. Edward, it is true, no longer went his boating excursions. The sight of the water was to him intolerable, and never failed to recall the merry voice of Willy on that sad night, when the child had been so enraptured with the oars and the sails upon the river, and had in the joy of his young heart said that there was but one thing better than the river, and that was the glorious sea, to which he would soon go. Poor little fellow! his voyage was soon over, and his bark safely anchored in a fair haven, ere storm or tempest could mar its beauty. But it was not turning away from aquatic amusements, which,

though innocent enough in themselves, had led Edward into evil, nor visits to Willy's grave, nor remembrances of Willy's words, touching and harrowing as they were to his warm affections, that were sufficient to change Edward Norris. He had yet to learn that it was in *himself*, not in any outward circumstances or temptations, that the true danger lay; that it was the whole current within that needed to be directed aright, and that afflictions and warnings were insufficient except as means, rightly improved, to alter the *nature*, which was prone to evil, and that continually. He left home at last, and his career, in all its particulars, it is not needful for the purpose of this little work to pursue.

Without going great lengths in sin, the spring time of Edward Norris's existence was passed in carelessness and indifference to the most important concerns of an intelligent and immortal being. To follow him to the summer season, and to the autumn time of life, when the low, sad, lament was uttered, "the summer is past, the harvest over, and I am not saved," were but to repeat an oft told tale. It was the tale of Edward Norris.

The temptations of Ellen and Annie in their quiet home did not lessen as they grew older. Ellen, deeply as she felt her little brother's death, and impressed as she appeared to be by the awfulness of the sudden removal of one so young, had a sort of bluntness in her moral perception of truth; a bluntness increased by daily unwatchfulness, and that morbid desire for human approbation, which, as a child, led her to prefer the good opinion of a fellow creature to the favour of God her Creator. Annie's disposition was different. She was the same light-hearted girl at sixteen that she had been at nine. Highly attractive both in person and in manners, she was much sought as a desirable visitor. Even old ladies liked to hear her rattle; and young parties were never thought complete without Annie. If there were any fear in the minds of mothers about the dulness of an evening entertainment, "Let us ask Annie Norris," they would say, "she can talk, and sing, and do anything." Annie loved to oblige: she had really a pleasure in amusing and gratifying others, independently of the extreme personal gratification which it was to her to talk. She had a lively sense of the ridiculous,

and was at times unintentionally betrayed by her wit into satire. She could talk well, moreover, was tolerably well cultivated, though not deeply read, kind hearted, and could we but add thoroughly truthful, she would, indeed, have been an acquisition to any society. It was hinted in the sketch of Annie's character as a school girl, that she was much given to exaggeration. This habit did not decrease with her growth. It was the particular form indeed in which her carelessness of truth developed itself, a form, alas, too common with the young.

What is exaggeration but a lie? Facts need no embellishments in conversation. Dr. Johnson wisely remarked that a child should be reproved if he asserted that he had seen an occurrence take place from one window whilst it really had been seen from another; so invaluable did he esteem accuracy in narration.

Although a great favourite with her companions, her additions, in order to bring out a droll story with full effect, were at times more copious than even the lovers of fun and marvel could swallow; but whilst they were on matters of small import, this was thought of little con-

sequence by her hearers. Though it was not uncommon for more than one voice in a circle to cry out, "oh, Annie, that is one of your imaginations," or, "come Annie, that is rather too much;" still so strong was the young girl's faith in her powers of amusement, that she would be little abashed, and take small pains to prove the truth of what she had uttered. Such popularity, however, is but ephemeral, and the greatest talkers have sometimes the greatest trials to endure of neglect and even contempt. Annie was as yet in her zenith, when one evening at a social party at a Mr. Taylor's, she was as usual entertaining the company with some of her random recollections of a visit she had paid a short time previous to an aged aunt of her father's, to whom she applied that despised epithet of "spinster." She enlarged upon her meanness and the extraordinary dinners they used to have; the same joint, she said, appearing under many different forms; one leg of mutton for five days, first as leg, secondly as hash, thirdly as mince, fourthly as a sort of rice mixture, and fifthly as an indescribable sort of stew, not an Irish exactly, but a kind of *union*

stew, composed of recipes from the three kingdoms. So ran on Miss Annie, and it was thought very amusing by most of her hearers, whose minds not being very large, entered with great zest into the trifling detail of Miss Norris's housekeeping. It was not here that Annie stopped; at present she had said nothing of any particular consequence, but encouraged by the interest of her hearers she went on:—There was no wine allowed at Miss Norris's, of course, no beer, nor anything exciting. The coffee was most studiously robbed of anything deleterious in that way, and the tea was of the same mild order of things. Indeed, the only strong things in Miss Norris's house were her opinions, and they were administered liberally enough. Thus was the young lady chattering in a very lively way, when a gentleman, who had been attracted by her animated face, came to the side of the room where she was sitting, to hear what could interest the listeners so much. "Perhaps she is not rich," said one of the auditors, "and that may be one reason for what you call her meanness." "Oh, indeed, she is," said Annie, "I know that from good authority, but she is a

screw. Her dress also is quite consistent with her *ménage*."

"Does she not give a great deal away?" said the elderly gentleman who, first attracted by Annie's lively tongue, was now listening to her with a severe and altered expression. "I can only say, sir, I am not a pensioner of hers, nor did I ever see her give away anything. There was a great boiling of bones sometimes in the kitchen, but to judge from their appearance in the parlour, I fear the poor, if the poor had them, had but a sorry repast." The gentleman was silent, and the conversation was changed. "Have you not cousins?" asked Mr. Ellis abruptly, when he could obtain a seat by Annie. "Oh yes, sir, plenty." "Have you any cousins who are not in affluence?" Annie reflected for a minute, and said, "Oh yes." "Do you know that some of those cousins, owing to the late reverses in their father's fortune, are obliged to seek their own livelihood as governesses?" "Oh yes, sir, to be sure," said Annie blushing, for she did not exactly like either the inquisitorial tone of the old gentleman, or the forced confession that she had cousins obliged to earn their living.

"You do not know, perhaps, that Miss Norris has, for the last twelve months, assisted those girls out of an income by no means large; not by giving them money or dresses, this would not have been such real kindness, but by paying for their instruction under the best masters, that they may be fitted for teachers. This may account a little for the appearance of the mutton in various forms. But this is not all; I have a nephew, who is anxious to enter the church; he is the eldest of many sons, and his father opposed it both from want of means and from want of sympathy with his desire. Miss Norris, who heard of the circumstance, and knew of the goodness of the young man, promised to meet the college expenses, and has amply performed that promise. These are but a few of the acts of the mean old lady, whose character you have just been ridiculing." Annie looked really sorry; she was not an unkind girl, and immediately expressed her regret that she had talked so foolishly. "But sir," she said, "I was only in joke, and really there was no harm in what I said of my aunt." "Just because you could not, without telling a positive falsehood, say any real

harm to Miss Norris; but beware of the tongue, young lady. I am an old man, therefore receive a word of advice from me. I have, I assure you, known much mischief follow even from the thoughtless talk of an exaggerating young lady at an evening party."

Annie's tongue ran no more that evening you may be sure. It would have been well had her inconsiderate mode of talking never been more mischievous than when she descanted on her aunt's meanness. Her mortification in this instance was great, but it was soon forgotten, and the next day she would possibly have repeated the offence, had opportunity or temptation been presented to her. One evening, not long after, at the Ansons, who continued their patronage to Ellen and Annie, the conversation turned on Mary Marshall, "It is very extraordinary to me," remarked Miss Fanny Anson, "that Mary Marshall should be such a friend of yours. I cannot see anything like similarity or congeniality in you." "Oh, we are not great friends," said Ellen, which was true. Great friends Ellen Norris and Mary Marshall could never be. There was, as Miss Frances Anson remarked,

no congeniality whatever. "We are not great friends, but we were schoolfellows," said Ellen, and strange to say, at this moment she felt ashamed of her acquaintance with a girl whose friendship many thought it a privilege to possess. The respect and affection of the true-hearted is indeed an honour. "I never liked Mary so well as Ellen did," remarked Annie. "At school she was always so over scrupulous. Oh, the sermons, the orations, she used to make to Ellen and me!" "She has been very kind to us, however," interposed Ellen, whose memory reverted to Mary's faithful and watchful care by Willy's dying bed. "Oh, I don't doubt," said Miss Anson, "she is a very good sort of person, but they are such common people; Mrs. Marshall is no lady, and though they may be all very well, I don't think their acquaintance is the thing for you. They are not genteel enough to be your friends. Fancy Ellen, now, marrying John Marshall." It may be remarked, *en passant*, that the thoughts and conversation of young ladies of Miss Anson's class, have continual reference to matrimonial alliances. It was quite Mrs. Anson's rule to smile upon no acquaintance

for her daughters, which was not likely to promote their future prospects of settlement in life. At seventeen, and long before that age, she had laboured to impress her girls with the importance of the subject, and they had proved thus far apt scholars.

Ellen and Annie were quite nettled at the idea of John Marshall's name being coupled with theirs, and took great pains to assure Miss Anson of their full coincidence with her opinion of the Marshalls. It may seem difficult to account for the pique which the Ansons appeared to entertain against persons so entirely out of their line as the Marshalls; but the fact was, that they could not but perceive, in spite of their adventitious circumstance of superiority, that Mary was as far above them in all important matters, as they considered themselves above her in station, gentility, and fashion. Mary's mind was of no common order, and although she was not what is usually termed an accomplished girl, she was not without those charms, which simplicity, and a well disciplined mind, never fail to throw over the manner and deportment. The Miss Ansons were greatly scandalised and astonished, on an-

other occasion, at the appearance of Mary Marshall, at the house of a gentleman, who came up even to their standard of gentility and eligibility; still more were they shocked to see, that this was evidently not her first visit here, and their mortification knew no bounds, when they heard Mrs. Holland, the lady of the house, say, in answer to some inquiry—"Oh, that girl in white? she is Miss Marshall, a most engaging, interesting girl; I do believe, if she were to have an audience with the Queen, she would be as unaffected and as much at ease as she is now:—she is so perfectly simple-hearted." "Perhaps she has seen a good deal of society," returned the lady. "No, indeed, she is the eldest of a large family, and visits very little. I had some difficulty in persuading her mother to let her come here to-night, but really I think her so very desirable a companion for my daughters, that I am quite anxious to cultivate her acquaintance for them. There are so few in the neighbourhood that I could desire for their intimate associates, but Miss Marshall will do them good I know. Our girls' governess is sister to an old teacher of Mary's, and she says, that a more truthful and trans-

parent character she never saw." "I can quite believe it," replied the lady. "She is certainly far from handsome, but I think I never saw so beautiful an expression of countenance. She looks as if she were so entirely at peace." All this, the Miss Ansons heard, and reported to Ellen and Annie, who were with a little knot of girls in another part of the room. "She certainly is truthful enough," said Annie, who was afraid of appearing to be an intimate friend of Mary Marshall's, after Miss Anson's introduction, which, as may be supposed, was by no means flattering. "I hope there will be no dancing here to-night, for Mary would turn up her eyes in horror." "Oh, is she that sort of girl?" inquired one of the group. "Well, who is she, and how does she come here?" "Her father is nothing but a corn factor, or something of the sort," replied Miss Anson. "Come, Ellen, you know; what is it?" Ellen thus appealed to, said, she believed Miss Anson was right, and would gladly have changed the conversation, but it was arrested by a most extraordinary occurrence. Mary Marshall was seated at the piano!! How did the hearts of a dozen or more

envious young ladies beat, as Mary, with modesty, yet with no appearance of flutter and confusion, yielded to Mr. Holland's request, that she would sing. One or two hoped it would be a failure, that she might break down; and most of them were quite amazed at the self possession, confidence some called it, of a girl like her singing before so large a company. "How very strange! but she really sings wonderfully well," remarked one of the young ladies. "No wonder," said Annie, "she has actually been taking lessons of Signor Alboni, who has been teaching singing on a new system." "Miss Marshall taking lessons of Alboni! Impossible, Annie;" exclaimed Miss Anson, "my dear child, he charges ten or fifteen guineas for only three lessons." "It is true, nevertheless," said Annie, "and they have a new grand piano. Mary is quite coming out, I assure you." "But the Marshalls are so poor, Miss Norris." "Yes, I think it very strange. Mary has had a great deal spent on her education since she left school. I cannot imagine what Mr. Marshall means by it. Mary told me herself, she was taking lessons of Alboni, or I could not have believed it. So I

suppose this is a sort of advertisement of the Signor, to recommend him to the patronage of the young ladies of W —, for I understand he has very few pupils. Is it not ridiculous? John Marshall, too is going to Paris to finish his education; oh, they are coming out grand, I can assure you." Annie spoke this from pique, but she little thought the mischief she was doing.

A few days after, Mr. Marshall returned to dinner with a cloud on his brow. There were no mysteries nor concealments in that family, and to the mother's inquiring look, Mr. Marshall said, "not now, my dear; after dinner I will tell you."

When the cloth was removed, and the children were dismissed with the exception of Mary and the two elder boys, Mr. Marshall at once explained the cause of his uneasiness. "I have been to the Bank this morning, my dear, intending to speak to Mr. Anson about some matter of business. He, however, called me into his private room of his own accord, and apparently wished to have a little conversation with me. He is a pompous man, you know, though kindhearted, I believe, and his patronising airs are somewhat

hard to bear sometimes. But I have received too much kindness from him to mind them much. Well, I was rather puzzled with Mr. Anson's expression of face; he looked very hard at me and said he hoped my business went on well. I told him I had every reason to be satisfied, and that owing to his kind accommodation I believe I might speak hopefully and confidently about it. 'Well, well,' he said, 'I hope so too, don't mention that; only I wish to give you a hint or two, Marshall. Don't bring up your family with high notions; you must have a fine business indeed with those eight boys of yours, to make it wise for you to do this.' I looked at him in amazement; that I should stand in need of any such caution was perfectly inexplicable. I must have looked, I dare say, as I felt, quite bewildered. I have often had it said to me, 'give your children more advantages; you really don't go out enough, you don't take your proper position;' but I never have been warned yet against giving my children high notions; I said as much. 'Why, I understand,' he said, 'you are going to send your boys abroad. Is not a plain English school good enough for them; and I may as well tell you I was not a little astonished to hear of your

daughter's having a new grand piano, and taking lessons of Alboni; why, Marshall, I would not consent to the expense for my own daughters; *there!*' All I could say in reply was, that I was perfectly ignorant of any intention of my boys going abroad, or of my daughter's taking lessons of Alboni; yet I left him unconvinced, I know, and I am greatly annoyed about it. That Mr. Anson should think me capable of such dishonesty, for it would be nothing better, I cannot bear."

Mary, whose countenance underwent many changes during her father's speech, said, "It is strange, dear papa, that the first time I ever concealed anything from you, should have brought me into trouble; I cannot yet think how this has come about, but I will tell you all I know about it. You know how often you have wished John were a better French scholar, on account of his being obliged to refuse that situation in the merchant's office, in London, because he could not speak French so fluently as you thought needful. Miss Fellowes' brother, who is in Paris, has offered to give John a home in his family, if we could manage to pay the expenses, and I felt as if I would do anything to get a little money for the purpose. I confided my anxiety to Miss

Fellowes. Her sister, who is governess at Mr. Holland's, heard of it through her, and Mrs. Holland was so kind as to allow me to take lessons of Alboni with her daughters, without any expense whatever. This was a month ago; and, as Miss Fellowes is not musical, I have now the privilege of teaching Mrs. Holland's youngest little girls, as well as their cousins. Mamma knew I had this secret. I told her so, and she trusted me, did you not, mamma? but oh, papa! who can have gossiped about me in this way?" "I should not wonder," said John, "if it were one of the Miss Norrises; did you ever tell them, now?" "Oh," said Mary, a sudden light dawning upon her, "that is it. Annie Norris asked me one day, in joke, if I intended to take lessons of Alboni. I could not deny it, but I entreated her never to name it, and explained my reasons. Oh, what a mischief-making girl that Annie Norris is." "My dear Mary," said her father, "I am fully satisfied. We can soon set matters right, I hope; but your disappointment I am sorry for. Cheer up, my little music mistress; I little thought you were turned professor, though I always liked your singing and playing."

CHAPTER XI.

VISIT TO THE BANK.

"NOW, Mary dear, be merciful to the Norrises," was Mrs. Marshall's charge to Mary, as she set out to demand an explanation of Annie. "You are not yet certain that Annie did tell Miss Anson. It is only your supposition." Mary shook her head. She was much tempted to call on Mrs. Holland, and tell her of her disappointment; but on second thoughts she resisted the temptation, for she knew it would very much prejudice her mind against the Norrises. Ellen and Annie met Mary coldly; each was so conscious of having acted the part of a false friend to Mary that they could not receive her with cordiality or openness. There is nothing which makes us more bitter than the consciousness of having injured another. "I am come," Mary began, "to ask you, Annie, if you ever told the Ansons of my taking music lessons of Alboni.

I need not ask you, however; no one but yourself knew, so no one else could have told them. Oh, Annie, if you had asked such a thing of me, I could not have betrayed you; and how could you add that my brothers were going to expensive schools in France. Who told you *that?*"

Annie was silent. To deny anything to Mary Marshall was almost impossible, even for a more apt deceiver than Annie Norris. She did not, therefore attempt it, but replied, with as much effrontery as she could assume, that she did not see the necessity for having concealed it at all, and that for her part she hated mysteries, and was a very improper person to trust with secrets on that account. "It is rather strange then, Annie, that you were so anxious to discover mine; but why, since you knew the truth, did you not tell it literally; Mr. Anson has heard of my taking lessons of Alboni; has heard that my brothers are going to school abroad; and that we have bought a splendid grand piano. The last information you never had from *me.*" Annie blushed. "Shall I recall our conversation to you now? You asked me the other day, in joke I suppose, if I intended to take lessons of Alboni.

I told you I had done so, for I could not tell a lie, and it would have been an equivocation to have answered, no. But do you recollect I told you at the same time, that a friend of mine had generously paid for those lessons? Remember *that*, Annie;" Annie did not reply. "Remember *that;* you forgot it when you told the Ansons that I was taking lessons of Alboni." "I never said, Mary, that you paid for them." "No, but you led the Ansons to suppose that my father was paying an extravagant sum for my accomplishments, and thus intentionally left a false impression on their minds, by keeping back part of the truth. Now, remember what I told you about John. Did I ever say that my brothers were going abroad?" Annie could not say, she forgot, she believed Mary said something of the sort. "You do *not* believe it, Annie, you know you do not. Don't you recollect I told you, that John had just lost a situation, because papa dared not assure the gentleman about to employ him in a foreign merchant's office, that he was a good French scholar, and that Miss Fellowes' brother, who is residing in France, had offered to take John for a twelvemonth, if we could pay his

travelling and other slight expenses for the time. Don't you remember this?" Annie assented. "How then could you say that papa thought English education was not good enough for my brothers, and that, therefore, they were going abroad. The story about the new piano I cannot account for. We have, as you may see, no instrument but that which mamma had when she married. And now I will tell you the mischief you have done. You have shaken Mr. Anson's confidence in my father. He was this very day going to ask the help and advice of his banker at a very critical point in his affairs, and was met by the news, that his children were being brought up with high and extravagant notions. What reparation can you make for this? How can he now ask assistance from Mr. Anson? My own disappointment is nothing, compared with papa's distress. May you never know the evils of a false friend, Ellen and Annie, but I fear you will have few *true* ones."—"I do not," resumed Mary, after a pause, "mean to be unkind or severe; you must forgive me if I have appeared so, but you cannot wonder at my feeling strongly on the subject. From strangers this would have

pained me less, but I feel it from you very much, and scarcely know how I can have intercourse with you in future; I must have *confidence* in my friends."

Ellen and Annie sat for a few moments in silence after Mary's departure. At length the latter said, "we must go and set this matter right with Mr. Anson. Had we not better, Ellen?" From this, however, when it came to the point, they both shrank. The Miss Ansons were gone that very day to town, and to approach their father with the confession that they had exaggerated their tale, nay invented it, appeared to both sisters impossible. What should they do? Annie thought it no harm to wait a few days, and Ellen quite agreed with her, and so they waited. In the mean time, Mr. Marshall could perceive that his banker was growing more and more unaccommodating. He could not communicate with him on the subject upon his mind, because he saw that he was as unwilling to give credit to his assertions as to afford additional credit to his account. The thing at last became serious. The state of trade was alarming, and Mr. Marshall, who was too honourable to disguise

the matter, or further to involve the property and interests of others, thought it right to consult a few of his principal creditors in reference to the state of his affairs.

And what did Mary do? She did not sink, you may be sure of that. She felt that, however innocently, she had been one cause of her father's difficulties; and one afternoon she left home and applied for admission to the private room of the great and rich Mr. Anson; a man to whom Mary had never spoken in her life, and whom she was wont, in her simplicity, to consider of as much consequence as the Prime Minister himself. The clerk stared, and informed the applicant that Mr. Anson was not to be disturbed. Sir William Elson was with him. The name of a baronet failed to daunt Mary Marshall. "I can wait, sir," she replied. There was a little joking went round the counter, and Mary did not feel particularly comfortable. She would have given anything to see a friend, an acquaintance only, in that busy little banking house, some one to conduct her to the foot of the throne, for such she felt that awful parlour of Mr. Anson's to be, but this was not her happiness. Sir William

Elson came out, and Mary Marshall asked permission to go in. The door was opened, she passed the threshold, and stood before the portly form of Mr. Anson. He stood with watch in hand, and Mary, seeing her minutes were numbered, said, "Sir, I am come to speak to you about my father." "What is your name?" asked the banker abruptly. Mary gave the necessary information. "Well, Miss Marshall, what then? my time is very limited, excuse me." "I am only come to assure you, Sir, that what you have heard about my father's extravagance is untrue, all untrue." "My dear girl, it is no business of mine, don't suppose that has influenced me. You know nothing of business, my little lady, it is the depressed state of trade that has brought your father into trouble." "Sir," said Mary, respectfully, "will you answer me this question? would you have been thus hard on my father ten days ago?" "I don't know, indeed," said Mr. Anson. "Yes, yes, you don't understand accounts—yes, the account has run too long." "I do not understand accounts," said Mary, "not a banker's account certainly, but I know your mind has been influenced by hearing of a daughter of your

debtor spending fifteen guineas for music lessons; of his sons going to a foreign school; of extravagant purchases and pretensions. Without understanding accounts, Sir, I can understand well how this has affected your mind, for I know you have no other reason to doubt either my father's judgment or honour. If you have, you are the first man that ever did." "Time, *time*, Miss Marshall, you have not learned the value of that," said Mr. Anson, who was apparently absorbed in a little memorandum during this speech.

His hand was on the bell, but Mary darted forward. "Mr. Anson, I am sure that you will never repent an act of kindness. Hear me but one moment. Mrs. Holland paid for my music lessons. My father knew nothing about them. Oh! concealment is always foolish, but I wished to surprise him; if I had told him I should have acted better, and this would not have happened. I have been learning music in order to teach, Sir, and to help my brother to a situation. I am conscious of no other extravagance. I know, indeed, there has been none. My younger brothers have been removed from school, and mamma and I teach them ourselves. You have been misin-

formed, Sir, but I acknowledge that I did foolishly to keep my music lessons a secret. I was fearful of failing, or should not have done so, but, Mr. Anson, you *will* believe me, will you not?" Mr. Anson, accustomed as he was to appeals from all kinds of applicants, could not fail to be interested in the earnest and yet unaffected manner of the girl. She was neither beautiful nor elegant. Her high print dress and plain straw bonnet, were not of a particularly fashionable make, but Mary needed no adornment. Her clear eye never quailed before Mr. Anson. It followed him every moment. If he looked down, Mary looked at him; if he looked up, there was Mary's eye, uninteresting in colour, but so lovely in expression. At length he said, "Well, Miss Marshall, well, we will see about it; good day." He opened the door for her this time, but Mary was firm. "Yes, Sir, but you have many things to think about. It will matter little to you, but it will matter very much to my poor father whether you will see him *now* or bye and bye. I heard a note from you to papa, but a short time since, in which you said, 'There is no man living I would trust sooner than you.' You are right

Mr. Anson, for who should know my father better than I do? He never, never, broke his word to one of us. He is true at *home*, Sir. Oh! Mr. Anson, trust him yet. He will never deceive you, he cannot, Sir. He knows not how. If I am bold, Sir, forgive me; I do so love my father: only try him, Sir, will you?"

Mr. Anson was a man of the world, and quite accustomed to *scenes*, but there was that in Mary's quiet, yet earnest manner, which overcame him. "Well, my dear, well, send your papa to me," was the speech of the old gentleman this time, "and I will see what I can do." "At what time, Sir?" inquired the persevering daughter. "At six o'clock, at my own house."

How light was Mary's step home! and how joyful her message to her father. The meeting between Mr. Marshall and Mr. Anson was satisfactory, and it was with a heart full of joy that Mary received her father's good night kiss. "Papa," she said, with her arm around his neck, "this is the first time I have ever concealed anything from you, and it shall be the last; have you forgiven me?" "Oh, yes, Mary, there is nothing to forgive, and had there been, you have

made amends. But, my dear girl, how did you summon up courage to go into that sanctum of Mr. Anson's. I assure you stouter hearts than yours have beat quick there." "Oh, papa, I did not like it certainly; I did not like the clerks, whispering and their signs, but when once I was in, it was not so bad after all. You know I was not going to say, or do, anything wrong, and Mr. Anson, though a banker, is but a man, and I, though only a girl, am the daughter of a man as good, I think; so I was not afraid. I disliked my visit to the Norrises the other day much more; and now, father, that mamma is strong again, shall I be of more use to you by going out, or by remaining at home? I have no wish to leave home, but I am ready to do it if you think it best. I have not named it before, for I have had my own bright schemes, that my music lessons would bring in a little money, but I cannot but see that I shall have little honour in my own town, and if mamma can spare me, I ought, perhaps, to use the education you have given me in teaching others." "Look at your seven brothers, my dear; there is, I think, scope for your educational talents at present, and though

I shall never be a rich man, yet, Mary, we will not part if possible. Partings will come soon enough, let us hold together whilst we can.—John, my boy, there are other ways of advancement, beside a clerkship in a foreign merchant's office, and I shall want you at home for the present. The proof you have received of your sister's love, must, I am sure, be very grateful to you, and don't let us look too much to second causes. This disappointment is not a thing of chance, depend upon that; there is One who knows what is good for us, better than we know ourselves, who will sometimes lay low our fondest hopes, and frustrate our favourite schemes, to teach us how dependent we are upon him. He has provided for us all these years," said the good father, looking affectionately at his wife and elder children, "and we will seek no other guide now. He will direct us aright.

'The Lord hath provided,
The Lord will provide.'

"These are words with which we may happily sink to sleep to-night, my dears."

CHAPTER XII.

CHARITY HOPETH ALL THINGS.

IT would be a pleasant task to trace out the history of each member of this happy family. Not that they were exempt from trials and difficulties; no great accession of fortune came to Mr. Marshall's relief, but as a straightforward man of business, he was fairly successful, and the temporary difficulty in which he had been placed, appeared to raise him up many friends, who interested themselves in obtaining situations for the elder boys, and facilitating the education of the younger children. Mary was not obliged to leave home, a sphere which she was eminently calculated to adorn. Before taking leave of her, we will peep at her and her mother, in their busy parlour hard at work for the boys. John was going to his new situation in the following week, and Harry was to take his place in his father's counting room; Edwin and James were

to go to a good school, in the neighbourhood, at Christmas; and the four little ones were to be Mary's charge at home.

Whilst they were thus employed, talking over their hopes and fears for the dear children, Anne entered and asked for an interview with her mistress. "Shall I leave, mamma?" asked Mary, seeing that Anne looked rather oddly at her. "Oh no, Miss; I am only come to say, ma'am, that I'm going to leave you, not for any other place though, ma'am, I should never try that; I don't know who would put up with my odd temper, as you have done for nine years past; but ma'am—I'm going to be married." "Dear me," said Mary, innocently, "I am surprised." "Well, Miss Mary, I don't know why you should," said Anne, rather nettled. "Oh no, nor do I," replied Mary pacifically. "I'm really sorry, Anne," said Mrs. Marshall, affectionately, "and I fear I shall not soon get suited with another servant, but we must look out for one and perhaps you are in no hurry." "Why, ma'am, the fact is, I am; I have known Charles Elmer this six years, as you know ma'am, and now he has heard of a gardener's place, in a

family in Hampshire, and a cottage and all, and he wishes to marry directly, so I am anxious to leave you as soon as is convenient."

From this there could be no appeal, and Mary and her mamma were soon seen sallying forth in quest of a new maid. No one who has been on this errand will be surprised to hear that after a weary walk, to inquire the character of two to whom they had been directed, the mother and daughter returned home to tea, excessively tired, and disappointed with their failure. One was, according to her late mistress' account, a perfect servant; perfectly honest, and steady, and obliging, and neat, and clean, and a great deal more. "For what did she leave you ma'am, then?" naturally inquired Mrs. Marshall. "Oh, she was so fond of dress, and stopped out too late of an evening, and so on," until by degrees the parting of mistress and servant was accounted for; and there was no better success with the second. They were seriously pondering the matter, no unimportant one, at Mrs. Marshall's house, when the servant announced an applicant; it was Susan, the old nursemaid of the Norrises. The Marshalls did not recognize her, but on making inquiries

they found that it was the same to whom Ellen, in mistaken kindness, had given a fair character to a lady, some months before. In spite of the advice of Miss Fellowes, Ellen Norris had yielded to Susan's petition to write her a character through which she might obtain a situation, Susan giving as an excuse for not applying to her last place, that her mistress had left England for a residence on the Continent. This piece of deception entirely failed however. Although she procured the place she did not retain it. As might have been suspected, she yielded to temptation, and though not convicted of any gross act of theft, was proved so habitually false in her conduct, that she was dismissed in great disgrace. She had passed three months in privation, suffering, and illness, when she heard of the Marshalls' place. She applied for it, with faint hopes of obtaining it indeed, but from that despair which her desolate and friendless situation induced. Her tale was soon unfolded, and the poor girl, no longer attempting deception, and overcome by the kind interest which Mrs. Marshall's voice and manner evinced, was faithfully correct in the narration of her past history.

Mrs. Marshall pointed out to her the impolicy, as well as the sin of her conduct. "The temptation was great ma'am, very great. No one would have taken me, knowing my real character, so I thought my only way was to go under a false one. I see it was wrong now, but then I had no strength to do right. A better way would have been to deserve a true character, I know, but I was starving; not that I believe want is any excuse for dishonesty or falsehood. Nor do I think that God ever long suffers such things to prosper. So I have been thinking for the last three months that I have laid out of employment. My wages are spent, and I came to you by the advice of Mr. Norris's cook. She did not give me any idea of your hiring me, but she said you would give me the best advice, and I am come to you as a last hope. I have seen you often, though I dare say you forget me. My mistress, Mrs. Norris, was a kind one ma'am, and had I stayed with her I should never have been as I am, and yet, I do not know; no *circumstances* seemed to do me good. It was my own bad heart that led me astray. I see that now; but, Mrs. Marshall, ma'am, to come to the point,

will you *try* me? I do not promise, I scarcely dare hope, I shall succeed, but will you watch me and give me a trial? Injure you, I feel sure I could not, but you know that I have been a liar so long that it is almost a habit." Mrs. Marshall scarcely knew what reply to make. Mary looked anxiously on her mother's countenance. "I have children, Susan; if I had not, I would try you; but I dare not expose them to the effects of your example. You must have something to do with them you know, and poor Mrs. Norris always thought her children's character suffered from your early lessons to them. I believe and hope you see the evil of your past life, and, indeed, I would not be severe upon you, but how can I risk my children's present and eternal welfare for you?" "Oh, ma'am," said Susan, "I cannot wonder, and if I did not hope that I am changed, that I really hate the sin to which I have been a slave so many years, I would not ask you." "But, Susan, you have had many lessons, and what confidence can I have in your present state of sorrow and anxiety? Have you never felt miserable before, and, after making resolutions, been as bad as ever? You

have had good mistresses, one I knew well, and surely if you fell into temptation whilst with her, I cannot hope to have influence over you." "Yes, ma'am, I cannot deny the truth of what you say, but as I was then, I do not believe an *angel* could have kept me from sinning: but"—. "But what, Susan?" "It seems presumptuous in me to say so to you, ma'am, and it is early too to speak of it, for I have found out my deceitfulness of heart so often; but it is not my *heart* that I trust, ma'am, this time. When I left my last place, I should have perished, I think, but a kind widow—you know her ma'am—Mrs. Frost, took me in as a lodger. Then I fell ill, for I was so wretched, I felt sometimes as if I should destroy myself. As I lay six weeks on a sick bed, I had time enough to think, and to turn my heart inside out, if I may say so.. I found no comfort there. Then I asked myself what it was in me that always made me, in spite of my good resolutions, (and I have had them, ma'am, times and often;) what it was that made me such a lying, deceitful girl? How it was that I was carried away by my habits of falsehood? Then I felt as if it were my fate, and as though I could not

help it. Mrs. Frost used to talk very kindly to me, and gave me good advice, and she read to me out of the Bible, a book I had read but little, as you may suppose, for years. The words that struck me most were:—'Without me ye can do nothing.' Now I felt I had never asked God to help me yet; not in earnest, I mean, because I had never seen that my whole self needed to be made new, that there was, in short, nothing to be done with my old bad nature. I had always thought before, that if I had been some one else, or in some other circumstances, I should do better. I told Mrs. Norris I thought I should have less temptation as housemaid than as nurse, and the dear lady gave me the trial; and so I was always thinking, but at last I was taught the real state of the case." "And what was that, Susan?" "Why, ma'am, that 'my heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.' I had often been told so before, but I had never *felt* it. This is why, ma'am, I think and hope that you may depend on my sorrow. It is very bitter, ma'am, more so than you may think. My whole life seems wasted. If you will not try me, can you at least tell me how you think I may get a

living? Mrs. Frost is kind, but she is very poor. I would take in washing, or anything, but I am not strong yet, and I cannot bear to live on her.' Miss Marshall, whose interest in the conversation was extreme, felt a little disappointed to hear her mother still say that she could make no promise; and when the servant had retired, she broke forth into earnest entreaties to try the poor woman, at least for a time.

Before long Mrs. Frost, with whom Susan had been lodging, appeared. She was a respectable, but poor widow, and her character had so long been known to Mrs. Marshall, as a good and consistent person, that the few earnest and hopeful words she spoke for her lodger encouraged her to make the trial. "She has suffered much, ma'am," said Mrs. Frost, "she was almost given over after she left her last place, and I took her in from pity; for I knew her father and mother, and her being a sinner was no reason why I should look down upon her, so I took her in. I was very shy of placing much reliance on her at first. I got good Mr. Welsh to come and visit her, and he was very faithful with her. 'No one,' he used to say, 'likes the consequences of

sin, no one, my girl, likes *punishment;* but is it the suffering you are sorry for, or is it the thought of the holiness and love of Him you have offended that makes you weep?' I quite believe, ma'am, she is sorry now, and that with a right sort of sorrow. Won't you try her, ma'am?" And Mrs. Marshall did try her. She bore the disapprobation of a great many of her more cautious friends for running such a risk, but she believed that if she erred she erred on the side of mercy. "Well, ma'am, you have more faith in professions than I," said Mrs. Mordan, "to take a girl out of prison into your family. I suppose you know she is a thief and a liar." "I know her history," said Mrs. Marshall to this and similar remarks, "I know she has been what you describe, but I believe her to be truly penitent." "Oh, do not trust too much to the penitence of a girl who was ruined by her own misconduct. I think we should set up a high standard, or servants will be encouraged to do wrong, and grow bold, thinking they have but to profess sorrow, and will be set up again." "As we cannot see the heart, Mrs. Mordan, this is all we have to depend upon with our fellow-creatures, till we give them

time to show the fruit of true repentance. Susan's conduct has been after all but a strong picture of our own to God. The shadows may be deeper, but we are poor judges, I think, of degrees of sin. Though we may not have broken the moral law in the very way which this girl has done, we have still all broken it, and are to the best of masters but unprofitable servants. Suppose he spurned us when we went to him with our confessions, as we are disposed to do the sinners that appeal to us, which of us, think you, would have a place in his rest above? I know what you would say. It is all very well, but not practicable. Now, I do not believe that there is a duty imposed upon us in the Bible that is not practicable. He who taught us to pray, 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' meant *practical* forgiveness. If, as I believe, Susan has received forgiveness of our Heavenly Father, how can I judge her? To *say* we forgive is not enough. It is like bidding the hungry be filled and clothed when we give them neither food nor clothing; to tell these poor, desolate, and erring ones we wish them well, and yet hold out no hand to help them. On this principle I have tried several. On the

same, I gave my present valuable cook a trial, seven years ago, when she came to me with a very blemished character. All my servants have not turned out so well, I confess, but there is a blessing promised to the merciful, is there not, ma'am? And who shall say that he needs not that mercy?"

It would be unreasonable to suppose that Susan's character was ever remarkable for candour or sincerity; but she watched and prayed against her easily besetting sin, and great was the joy of her mistress to see that she gained ground, and that instead of denying her faults she was daily more ready to confess them and less disposed to excuse herself for any omissions and commissions.

Mrs. Marshall was indeed particularly careful to avoid tempting Susan to evil. She rarely asked her a question relative to an error of which she merely suspected her; and never taxed her with a fault unless she were perfectly certain of the fact, a caution which is too little observed by us to the weak and erring. There were times of discouragement in Susan's history as a servant, but there was no time in which Mrs. Marshall

repented the course she had taken; and so potent is example, that, ere many weeks had passed, Susan received lessons in that truthful family which the sterner judges in her previous service had failed to convey.

"Oh! Miss Marshall," said Susan one evening, as she was assisting her young mistress in some work, "what would I give to be as little afraid of speaking the truth as you are. I am growing bolder, I think, but still I never could, I know, be so brave in speaking it as you are! It seems natural to you." "It is not natural, Susan, but I believe some characters, from want of early training, are far more tempted to concealment than others. I have been encouraged from my childhood to speak the truth; but don't suppose that I never felt any disposition to do otherwise. The strongest, as well as the weakest, in this respect need help of God. Three months ago you would have told mamma, when reproved as you were this morning for stopping out so long on an errand, that the shopman kept you, or that you forgot something and had to go back; but you told the truth to-day, that you had gossipped with an acquaintance. Take courage, then, we

must all have our beginnings; and there is nothing that grows stronger by care, nothing that does more credit to cultivation and training, than *Truth*."

Here we will leave Mary Marshall, not in a very interesting or sentimental employment, as some of my readers may think, cutting out a brother's shirt, and giving counsel to her mother's housemaid. No engagement, no matrimonial prospects even! No, dear readers, did I believe that the principle I have been endeavouring to illustrate would be strengthened by such a finale, I would give my heroine, Mary, a husband; entertaining you, in the first place, with a description of her courtship, with all its ups and downs, but I do not hold it necessary. It is certain that Mary Marshall, and those of Mary Marshall's class, will make as good wives as they have done daughters, sisters, and friends; and to you, therefore, I will leave the task, if you are so disposed, of marrying Mary.

The moral of a tale, to be remembered, should be short. Mine is furnished by the contrast between the characters of Ellen and Annie Norris and Mary Marshall. Endowed by nature with

sweet and amiable dispositions, with gentle manners, and excellent abilities, what should have hindered Ellen and Annie from being useful and beloved members of society? What, but the absence of that jewel which early in life the sisters cast away as a thing of little worth, and which in after years, amid the corruption gathered in their course through this world, they vainly sought to call their own. For although they were still courted by a few, and liked by others who did not perceive wherein their deficiency lay, they were daily realizing the truth of Mary's fear, expressed in her last visit to them—"You will have but few real friends." Sad enough is the case in youth, but when the golden locks are silvered o'er, when the grasshopper shall have become a burden, and desire shall fail, how shall they mourn in the retrospect of a wasted life! And even should they in riper years have seen their error, and repent of their delinquencies, will they not regret that in the freshness and beauty of morning, whilst their youth yet glistened with the dew, they did not take their young unwearied hearts to Him who would have graciously led them into the paths of truth and holiness for His name's sake.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAST WORDS.

IT is so much the habit of Young Readers to skip the preface, or introductory chapter of a work, that it is matter of surprise that authors should continue to provide such unwelcome material for the juvenile public.

Concluding chapters may share the same fate with a frivolous class; but although it were too much to expect that even the more thoughtful should turn back to a preface, it is possible that, under an impression of the seriousness of the subject, however imperfectly treated, they may be willing to hear the author to the end, notwithstanding that the Tale and its interest are over.

It is but a few words which the writer would append; words of more affectionate and familiar appeal than could be introduced in the course of the foregoing narrative. To the Young these pages are dedicated, to those who, having the

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falsehood and equivocation would not exist. A wide subject opens here, and one which should engage the serious attention of every youthful pilgrim in the early stage of the journey of life; but to enlarge upon it is scarcely within the limits, or becoming the pretensions, of a little book like the present. The solemn thought, however, which would suggest itself, is this:— If, as the Bible declares, "man goeth astray from the womb, speaking lies," How can I be brought back, and reconciled to a God of truth, with whom I am by nature and by practice at enmity? How, but by

"The cross—There and there only, tho' the Deist rave,
And Atheist, if earth bear so base a slave,—
There and there only is the power to save;
There no delusive hope invites despair,
No mockery meets you, no deception there;
The spells and charms that blinded you before,
All vanish there and fascinate no more.
I am no preacher, let this hint suffice,
The cross once seen, is death to every vice;
Else He that hung there suffered all his pain,
Bled, groan'd, and died, and agonised in vain."

COWPER.

THE END.